

# JUDAISM

## JEWISH POPULAR CULTURE IN CONTEMPORARY AMERICA

Norman L. Friedman

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## VARIETIES OF JEWISH PERSONALITY

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## WHERE DOES JEWISH HISTORY BEGIN?

Michael A. Meyer

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JUDAISM, conceived as a free and non-partisan organ, is dedicated to the creative discussion and exposition of the religious, moral and philosophical concepts of Judaism and their relevance to the problems of modern society. Through an exploration of the meaning and needs of the Jewish experience, it hopes to widen the channels of communication between Jews and to affirm Jewish verity and vitality to the world at large.

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*American Jewish Congress*

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# JUDAISM

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*The First Reader* R.G. 259

*Jewish Popular Culture in Contemporary America* NORMAN L. FRIEDMAN 263

## VARIETIES OF JEWISH PERSONALITY

*Orthodoxy With Moderation: A Sketch of Joseph Herman Hertz* SEFTON TEMKIN 278

*Brandeis and deHaas: Two Conflicting Styles of Jewish Leadership* A. JAMES RUDIN 296

*Judaism Despite Christianity* RIVKA HOROWITZ 306

*Janusz Korczak: Assimilationist or Positive Jew?* SAMUEL CHIEL 319

*Where Does the Modern Period of Jewish History Begin?* MICHAEL A. MEYER 329

*In Jerusalem: Reflections on Teaching the Holocaust* IRVING HALPERIN 339

*The Torah and Modern Man*  
Review-Essay on *The Torah—A Modern Commentary. I. Genesis*  
ed. Gunther W. Plaut ROBERT GORDIS 348

*Judaism and Modern Philosophy*  
Review-Essay on *Major Themes in Modern Philosophies of Judaism*  
by Eliezer Berkovits TRUDE WEISS-ROSMARIN 354

## REVIEWS

*Law and Theology in Judaism*  
by David Novak ELLIOT B. GERTEL 365

*La Haggada Enluminée*  
by Mendel Metzger RACHEL WISCHNITZER 369

*The Jewish Bund in Russia From its Origin to 1905*  
by Henry J. Tobias  
and

*Trotsky and The Jews*  
by Joseph Nedava MORRIS SLAVIN 372

*The Agunah*  
by Chaim Grade LESTER A. SEGAL 378

## COMMUNICATIONS

from Graenum Berger, Robert G. Weisbord, Henry Bamberger and Gilbert Kollin 382

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## STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

In increasing measure, modern men are turning again to the quest for a world-view on the issues that are timeless—the meaning of life, the challenge of death, the purpose of suffering, the significance of the individual, his relation to society, and the goal of history. In order to advance this enterprise of spiritual discovery of our time this Journal has been projected. It will be primarily concerned with the philosophy, ethics, and religion of Judaism as a factor in the contemporary world . . .

We are committed to the proposition that Judaism has positive value today for Jews and for the world . . . At the same time, we disassociate ourselves from the dangerous tendency toward the hardening of party lines on the contemporary Jewish scene . . . The members of the Board of Editors belong to every school of Jewish life or to none. The trends popularly referred to as Orthodox, Conservatism, Reform, Reconstructionism, as well as others that as yet have no specific names, have their advocates among us, though no institution or movement is officially represented . . . Undoubtedly, our differences will find expression in these pages, but we shall be at one in opposing the dogmatism which takes for granted that one's own particular standpoint has a monopoly on truth and the authoritarianism which would suppress any contrary point of view.

*Judaism* will be dedicated to the quest for truth in the spirit of freedom. Our columns will be open to anyone who has something significant to say and the ability to say it well. New and unconventional interpretations, whatever their standpoint, will be welcomed from every source, for we share the conviction of the Talmud that "Both these and the others are the words of the living God."—*From the introductory article by Robert Gordis, "Toward a Renaissance of Judaism" in Vol. I, No. 1.*



## *The First Reader*

THAT THERE ARE AT LEAST TWO LEVELS OF "Jewish culture" in contemporary American Jewish life is sensed by every observer of the current scene. However, the specifics of the "popular Jewish culture" require the analysis and synthesis of a trained sociologist. This task is performed by *Norman L. Friedman* in his paper, "Jewish Popular Culture in Contemporary America."

His article offers a dispassionate and comprehensive overall view of the content of Jewish pop culture in America today. His treatment is an indispensable first step toward evaluating this culture in terms of its significance for the quality of Jewish life today and tomorrow.

In one of its profoundest passages, the Mishnah compares God to a mintmaster, with one crucial difference. When a human mintmaster strikes off coins from the same mold, they are all identical. But God, using the same mold of Adam, the ancestor of the human race, nevertheless makes no two human beings identical. The infinite variety of human nature is nowhere more strikingly exemplified than in the Jewish people. This is particularly true in the modern era when the older tradition which was homogeneous, but by no means monolithic, has given way to a variety of worldviews, all bearing some relationship to the common heritage, but diverging in greater or lesser extent.

Four radically different Jewish figures are treated in this issue. In his paper, "Orthodoxy with Moderation," *Sefton Temkin* gives us a pen portrait of Dr. Joseph H. Hertz, the American-trained rabbi who became the Chief Rabbi of the British Empire. To be sure, there was some exaggeration in the designation, since, strictly speaking, he was only the official head of a group of Orthodox synagogues in London and its environs banded together as the United Synagogue. His authority was not only disputed by Reform and liberal Judaism in England, but by various Orthodox groups as well. Nevertheless, Hertz's redoubtable energy and intellectual vigor gave him an influence extending far beyond the confines of his own congregations, and he remained the Chief Rabbi even after the British Empire had ceased to exist! His preaching, his pastoral visits, his writings and, above all, his edition of the Pentateuch with a modern commentary which vigorously defended Orthodox doctrine, made him a world-wide force.

Far removed from the religious concerns of Rabbi Hertz were two American Zionists, Jacob deHaas, a veteran of many early Zionist struggles, and the great Louis D. Brandeis, later a member of the United

States Supreme Court, whom he won for the Zionist cause. The relationship of the two men is traced by *A. James Rudin* in his paper, "Brandeis and deHaas: Two Conflicting Styles of Jewish Leadership."

The heroic life story of Franz Rosenzweig, no less than the originality and profundity of his thought, has made this German-Jewish religious thinker a subject of perennial interest to modern Jews. He was deeply committed to the Jewish tradition, but in a sense quite unlike that of Rabbi Hertz. He became convinced of the life-giving power of the Zionist ideal to which he gave his fervent allegiance, but in a spirit poles apart from the political Zionism of Brandeis and deHaas. *Rivka Horwitz* examines several aspects of Rosenzweig's thought in her paper, "Judaism Despite Christianity."

The Polish-Jewish educator, Janusz Korczak, though he never denied his Jewish background, was not affiliated with many of the great movements of Jewish revival—religious, cultural or political. From the paper by *Samuel Chiel*, "Janusz Korczak: Assimilationist or Positive Jew," we can see that his world-view was a distillation of the ethical content of the Jewish tradition which he had inherited almost unconsciously—notably his faith in human potentiality, his hatred of injustice, and his compassion for the weak and the down-trodden. This noble idealist has his place among Israel's sons, both because of his life and because of his heroic death as a martyr at the hands of the Nazis.

The question, "Where does the modern period of Jewish history begin?" which is raised in a paper with the same title by *Michael A. Meyer*, is not purely academic. His analysis of the question indicates that there are important ideological considerations involved in the effort to delineate the beginning of the modern era in Jewish history. The author makes it clear that there are profound complexities involved, which explain the divergence of views among scholars. He comes to the conclusion that it is virtually impossible to decide upon a single date as marking the beginning of modern Jewish history, since a great deal depends upon the standpoint of the observer.

If the modern era in Jewish history be defined as the period when Jews came into contact with the technological, socio-economic and political conditions of modern life and encountered the challenge of modern scientific and philosophic ideas and attitudes, one important conclusion emerges. The modern era begins at different times for the various segments of world Jewry—in the 18th century for Western Jews, in the middle of the 19th century for Jews living in Czarist Russia, and in the middle of the 20th century for Oriental Jews redeemed from Arab oppression. The situation is parallel to what obtains in general history, where modernism, both in its technological and political forms as well

as in its inner cultural manifestations, emerged at different periods for different geographical areas. The modern age began in the 18th century for Western Europe and America, in the 19th century for Eastern Europe, and not until the 20th century, if then, for Asia and Africa.

As this observation demonstrates, the paper should stimulate intensive thought among all those concerned with the meaning of Jewish history.

Yeoman efforts are being made throughout the world to keep alive the memory of the Holocaust. Nevertheless, time and distance are inexorable forces, often working their will more effectively than do the conscious desires of men.

*Irving Halperin*, who teaches about the Holocaust in the United States, discovered in Jerusalem that there are mixed reactions to it. Even in the land of Israel the younger generation no longer has a vivid perception of this greatest catastrophe in Jewish history, but they do have a vigor that is encouraging. He ponders the implications to be drawn from these facts in his paper, "In Jerusalem: Reflections On Teaching the Holocaust."

There are two classes of readers for whom the Bible poses no major religious, philosophical or ethical problems. The first category consists of fundamentalist believers who have achieved their happy state not by solving the problems but by ignoring them, either because they "accept" the literal meaning of the text or read the text through the eyes of some "authoritative" re-interpretation transmitted as dogma from the past. The second category consists of secularist non-believers, who read the Bible as ancient literature and from the vantage-point of their "modernity" condescend to dismiss much of it as primitive, outmoded and meaningless.

The problem of achieving an understanding and appreciation of the Bible is basic for the vast number of men and women, young and old, who are unconverted to fundamentalism and unconvinced by secularism. They feel that the Bible has much to say to the human condition today, as it did in the past, and that its beauty and truth need to be made accessible to our generation by a more rigorous and complex process that will seek to do justice both to what the Bible "said" to its original authors, speakers and audience, and what it "says" to our age and those to follow.

The appearance of a *Commentary on Genesis*, under the official auspices of Reform Judaism, represents an important effort to interpret the Bible in terms meaningful to modern man. It is a subject of a review-

essay by *Robert Gordis* in this issue, entitled, "The Bible In Modern Dress."

While it is undeniable that the Jewish religion is not as widely observed as it was a century ago, the last one hundred years have witnessed an efflorescence of Jewish religious thought in the Western World. Even the most untraditional formulation of the philosophy of Judaism is part of the great intellectual tradition now 2,000 years old going back to Philo, Saadia and medieval Jewish philosophers. They all believed that there could be no basic contradiction between Judaism properly understood and the truths that could be derived from the use of man's faculties of reason and observation, embodied in philosophy and science. Because philosophic systems change and scientific discoveries continue to multiply, the task of interpreting Judaism anew in each age is unending.

Five distinguished representatives of modern Jewish religious thought each clearly marked off from the others, are Hermann Cohen, Franz Rosenzweig and Martin Buber, who were rooted in German philosophy and thought, and Abraham J. Heschel and, *Yibbadel lehayyim*, Mordecai M. Kaplan, who are among the glories of American Judaism. Their thought is a subject of very trenchant analysis and criticism by Eliezer Berkovits, himself a distinguished Jewish thinker in our day. His critique is, in turn, subjected to an equally vigorous analysis by *Trude Weiss-Rosmarin* in a review-essay entitled "Judaism and Modern Philosophy."

R. G.



# *Jewish Popular Culture in Contemporary America*

NORMAN L. FRIEDMAN

ALTHOUGH CONTEMPORARY AMERICAN "JEWISH popular culture" is a pervasive phenomenon among Jews, it has seldom been systematically described and analyzed. As an important fact of human life, so called "popular culture" has only in recent years begun to receive more serious and extensive academic study.<sup>1</sup> One widely-used academic definition of popular culture is that it includes:

. . . all those elements of life which are not narrowly intellectual or creatively elitist and which are generally though not necessarily disseminated through the mass media. . . . "Popular Culture" thus embraces all levels of our society other than the Elite—the "popular," "mass" and "folk." It includes most of the bewildering aspects of life which hammer us daily.<sup>2</sup>

As American Jews became increasingly acculturated, they participated widely in the amusement and leisure-activities of general American popular culture. What Gordon reported about a Midwestern Jewish community in the 1940's was typical:

The Sabbath has become more a day of recreation than a day of prayer and rest. Children use the day for parties, movie-going, shopping, dancing, music, and other special lessons, eating out, and in general having a good time. Mothers in ever-increasing numbers do their shopping, attend theaters and parties and the like. Fathers go out to the golf clubs, attend football games, indulge in a friendly game of cards, or take the family on an outing.<sup>3</sup>

## *Jewish Elite Culture*

Before turning to the specifics of Jewish popular culture, its counterpoint, what might be called "Jewish elite culture," will be examined. Jewish elite culture is rooted in the ideals and activities of traditional Judaism. It evolved out of an earlier religious communalism that predated twentieth century mass communications, mass production, and mass transportation, and when the individual lived in a more separate Jewish enclave, less confronted by a myriad of behavioral choices.

Jewish elite culture places emphasis upon study and learning, piety

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1. Within the last decade, a *Journal of Popular Culture* and a national Popular Culture Association were founded.

2. Ray B. Browne, "Popular Culture: Notes toward a Definition," in G. H. Lewis, ed., *Side-Saddle on the Golden Calf* (Pacific Palisades: Goodyear Publishing Company, 1972), p. 10.

3. Albert I. Gordon, *Jews in Transition* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1949), p. 97.

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and spirituality, justice and charity. The foundation is study and learning—knowledge about the classic Jewish texts, Jewish law, Jewish history, Hebrew (and, for some, Yiddish) language and literature. In Jewish elite culture, the Jewishly knowledgeable Jew is idealized. Piety and spirituality are the handmaidens of knowledge; an act of study is an act of piety. The traditional values of justice and charity are also important emphases of Jewish elite culture.

Jewish elite culture can, of course, be produced and experienced on the personal level, through the behavior of individuals and families. But, for the most part, in contemporary America, Jewish elite culture is incorporated into the agendas and goals of a wide variety of formally organized associations of Jews. Synagogues and temples, Jewish federations, local lodges and chapters of Jewish national organizations—these and other associations are the modern structural settings designed, at least in part, for Jewish elite culture. Numerous writers have remarked about this extensive “associational base”<sup>4</sup> of modern Jewish life:

That part of Jewish culture which was once expressed in face to face situations, in the home, in the street, or through the medium of a special group language has largely disappeared and . . . the great religious discipline which in the past permeated every aspect of individual and communal life is missing. At present Jewish culture in the United States is predominantly what Jews do under the auspices of Jewish organizations.<sup>5</sup>

The major contemporary organization that promotes the learning and spirituality elements of Jewish elite culture is the synagogue, usually with its synagogue school. Historically, these were the “House of Prayer” and the “House of Study.” Through prayer and through study (“Jewish education” and “adult education”) congregants are to become involved in Jewish elite culture’s goals of learning and spirituality. The synagogue rabbi oversees the grass-roots inculcation of Jewish culture, having himself earlier acquired it in more advanced forms through the rabbinical seminary and its Judaica scholar-teachers. The rabbi is the major authority figure of contemporary Jewish elite culture, the congregation’s symbol and guardian of Jewish learning and spirituality.

The goal of justice, in modern form, is sought through the “social action” liberalism programs of many (especially Reform) temples. It is also pursued in the civil rights orientations of such Jewish organizations as the American Jewish Committee, American Jewish Congress, Anti-Defamation League, and National Council of Jewish Women. The ideal of charity is realized through the elaborate efforts of Jewish federations, and Jewish organizations like B’nai B’rith, Hadassah, Mizrahi, Pioneer

4. See Daniel Elazar, “The Institutional Life of American Jewry,” *Midstream* 17 (June/July, 1971): 31–50.

5. Harold Weisberg, “Ideologies of American Jews,” in O. I. Janowsky, ed., *The American Jew: A Reappraisal* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1964), p. 348.

Women, O.R.T., and others, that raise funds for the welfare of fellow Jews in Israel, America, and other countries.

Most of these modern organizations, of course, have dual cultural activities. To differing extents, they promote elite Jewish culture (through study, piety, justice, and/or charity), while they also, in their modern sociability and recreation functions, sponsor activities of general American popular culture and of Jewish popular culture. Synagogues usually have sisterhoods, men's clubs, youth groups, and the like, that have parties, games, dances, and other general American popular culture amusements. Many of the special interest associations whose elite goals work for welfare and/or justice, also engage in such general American popular culture activities as card playing, bowling, baseball, self-improvement or how-to-do-it lectures about everything under the sun, theater parties, resort trips—recreation activities that cultivate friendships and sociability. One writer, in referring to the mass successes of the two largest organizations, B'nai B'rith and Hadassah, explained that

. . . they provide both an overall purpose attuned to the highest goals of Jewish life and local attachments based on the immediate social needs of the individual Jew in such a way that people can be members for either or both reasons.<sup>6</sup>

Other types of Jewish organizations have fewer or no elite goals, and, therefore, their activities are more devoted to general American popular culture than to much, if any, of Jewish elite culture. These include many Jewish Community Centers, the Jewish War Veterans, Jewish college fraternities and sororities, and Jewish country clubs.<sup>7</sup> But most of the above types of Jewish organizations also contain, in addition to general American popular culture, some aspects of Jewish popular culture.

### *Jewish Popular Culture*

Just as there is a general popular culture common to most of American society, there are also the more specific popular cultures of subgroups, such as Jewish popular culture. From this perspective, Jewish popular culture is defined here as those ordinary consumption/leisure products and activities, of a non-elite Jewish or Jewish-related character,

6. Elazar, *Op. cit.*, p. 42. For a valuable description of one Jewish community's organizations and their diverse functions, see Marshall Sklare and Joseph Greenblum, *Jewish Identity on the Suburban Frontier* (New York: Basic Books, 1967), pp. 250–268.

7. In Kansas City, Missouri, in the fall of 1973, for instance, the board of a leading Jewish country club was the center of disagreement as to whether or not the club should close on Yom Kippur. (It eventually did decide to close.) One (popular culture) argument for staying open was that: "The club had many requests—some in writing and some verbal—that it stay open for the convenience of those members who in fact want to play golf on the holiday." See *Kansas City Jewish Chronicle*, October 5, 1973: 1.

that are experienced by many, if not most, American Jews. Perhaps among others, there are three major manifestations of contemporary American Jewish popular culture: Jewish food, media Jewishness, and basic Yiddish.

### 1. Jewish Food

In 1956, Gans wrote that Jewish cuisine was a vital aspect of Jewish popular culture, in that many Jewish holidays were family/food-oriented, and that Jewish food was a pleasing item and symbol salvaged from Jewish tradition.<sup>8</sup> In general, this still applies today. Special food preferences are, of course, part of the popular culture patterns of many American subgroups; the key issues pertain to the specific place and meaning of those food-related activities for a given subgroup. "Eating Jewish," at first in the home and later outside-the-home, constitutes a common and memorable experience for most American Jews. The "Jewish food" ingredient of Jewish popular culture is comprised of the consumption of Jewish-style foods in and out of the home, and obtained from general stores as well as from specialized Jewish bakeries and delicatessens. Most of this takes place as a broader phenomenon than the more limited consumption, by the traditionally observant, of "strictly kosher" goods purchased from strictly kosher retailers or eaten in strictly kosher restaurants.

What are considered to be "Jewish foods" in America are mainly Eastern European dishes adopted and adapted from the countries in which Jews lived. Many of these specific foods are associated, traditionally, with specific Jewish holidays. Among the varieties of Jewish foods are hallahs, bagels, mazohs, mazoh balls, kreplakh, borsht, latkes, blinzes, gefilte fish, lox, gribenes, zimmes, strudel, chopped herring, kishkes, knishes, pitcha, chopped liver, pastrami, mandelbrot, and others.

Along with the association of certain foods with Jewish holidays, there has been an emphasis through Jewish history on food as a positive good. In the shtetl, for example:

Food is always good, always good for people, always a token of good feeling. There is no malicious food sorcery in the shtetl. To give food symbolizes not only maternal love but also the friendliness of the household to its visitors.<sup>9</sup>

This positive stress on food has led to much popular psychoanalytic speculation about the "orality" of Jews. Moreover, because of the richness of many Jewish foods and/or the expression of Jewish maternal love through over-feeding, Jewish food might be related to contemporary

8. Herbert J. Gans, "American Jewry: Present and Future," *Commentary* 21 (May, 1956): 429.

9. Mark Zbrowski and Elizabeth Herzog, *Life is with People: The Culture of the Shtetl* (New York: Schocken Books, 1962), pp. 372-373.

overweight; a 1973 Gallup poll revealed that while 46% of a sample of American adults reported themselves as overweight, 61% of the Jews reported thus, as compared with 47% of the Catholics and 47% of the Protestants.

The important question about Jewish food as an aspect of Jewish popular culture is: What is the meaning of Jewish food to that mass of adult American Jews who eagerly and happily eat it for non-elite reasons? This is particularly important in relation to the issue of Jewish identification, since there does seem to be some inestimable number of Jews for whom "eating Jewish" is a, if not the, major manifestation of their Jewish identity. The author is reminded of a Jewish-parentage professor who told him in an interview a few years ago that the main "Jewish" advantage of teaching in the Boston area, rather than in a small town, was that "I can go over to ————'s and get fresh, hot bagels anytime, night or day!" Indeed, this phenomenon is not a new one in modern Jewish history. There is

... in modern times a sort of "culinary Judaism," by which people identify with the Jewish religion mainly through this preference for traditional Jewish dishes. Indeed, assimilated Jewry in the orbit of the Hapsburg Empire from as early as the second half of the nineteenth century knew the conception of "Fressfroemigkeit" from somebody whose devoutness finds its expression mainly or entirely in his eating the proper customary dishes on each holiday.<sup>18</sup>

The usual interpretation of the meaning of Jewish food is that it appeals to a nostalgic family feeling about Jewishness, even if other concrete manifestations of Jewish identification are weak or absent. As one writer has put it:

The chief expression of the Jewish family spirit is eating. From the *shtetl* to the suburbs, food is the traditional symbol of love and solidarity. Families, as a rule, don't get together to "do" things. . . . The real business of the evening is the huge meal. . . . Food has a way of arousing a sense of Jewishness in people long after everything else has lost its influence over them. . . . The psychological mechanism in such cases is clear. In the minds of many people food is equated with childhood, with festive gatherings around the dining-room table, with family life. And family life was and still is the chief means of imposing on the child a sense of his Jewishness.<sup>11</sup>

The current author would submit that the above kinds of contentions about the meaning of Jewish food should be viewed as hypotheses to be further investigated, rather than as self-evident truths.

Further examination of Jewish food as Jewish popular culture reveals that beyond eating Jewish at home with the family, there are addi-

10. "Food," in Volume 6 of the *Encyclopaedia Judaica* (New York: Macmillan, 1971), p. 1421.

11. James Yaffe, *The American Jews* (New York: Paperback Library, 1969), pp. 309-310.



tional artifacts. The first American Jewish cookbook was printed in Philadelphia in 1871, and others have continued strongly since that time. Mass production and mass transportation make Jewish foods, including strictly kosher ones, readily available to consumers all over the country. Jewish-style bakeries in large cities provide a ready assortment of freshly baked goods. In urban magazines like *New York*, readers are instructed, for instance, in where to get the finest babkas in New Jersey,<sup>12</sup> or the best "old-fashioned" bagels in the city.<sup>13</sup>

But perhaps the most important and distinctive artifact of Jewish food popular culture is the "kosher-style" delicatessen-restaurant. Mainly in larger cities, it has persisted, grown, and prospered. It usually offers (non-kosher) meals of a Jewish "style," combined with a not-too-formal sociable atmosphere in which to meet, dine, and chat among Jewish sounds and smells.

In the Los Angeles area, for example, most of the Jewish delicatessen-restaurants that have evolved are family-owned and operated. Each has a somewhat unique history, menu specialty, decor, location, and clientele.<sup>14</sup> One may get the "downtown trade," another be "near the beach," others are for Jewish suburban families (Jewish counterparts of McDonald's), etc. One in Beverly Hills is known as a show business hang-out:

Nate 'n Al's is a superstar deli, renowned for its celebrity clientele—Milton Berle (Nova Scotia salmon and *fresh* hot tongue), Shecky Greene (corned beef), Joey Bishop (salami and eggs) . . . all hams come from Poland and Sweden, but "we bake them" . . . ("more movie and TV deals are made here over breakfast, . . . than in the studios all day") . . .<sup>15</sup>

## 2. Media Jewishness

Beyond home, hearth, and delicatessen, Jewish popular culture lives through the entertainment media—in the best-sellers Jews read, the television programs they watch, and the movies they see. American Jews engage in these mass media activities from an early to an old age, often reading about or viewing Jewish-related themes, stories, and characters. The totality of these presentations, their contents, and their subsequent individual and collective effects upon the Jewish reader and viewer, constitute the "media Jewishness" component of American Jewish popular culture. At present, no comprehensive research report of media Jewishness exists; but if it is difficult at this point fully to know contents, and nearly impossible to be certain of effects, it is possible to suggest which

12. Joan Gelman and Rita Tannenbaum, "Food Shopping in New Jersey," *New York* 5 (November 27, 1972): 84–89.

13. Mimi Sheraton, "The Bagel Finagle," *New York* 6 (August 6, 1973): 60–61.

14. George Christy, "The Heartburn Awards: Los Angeles' Best Delis," *Los Angeles* 18 (May, 1973): 58–61, 92–99.

15. *Ibid.*, 59–60.

media presentations are likely to have had widest exposure among Jews.

If it can be assumed that the top ten fiction and non-fiction general "best sellers" among books since about 1958 were also those most widely read by Jews, then those of popular Jewish-related content can be identified.<sup>16</sup> In the fiction category, these were *Exodus* by Leon Uris, a best-seller in 1958 and 1959, *Mila 18* by Leon Uris in 1961, *The Source* by James Michener in 1965, *Herzog* by Saul Bellow in 1964 and 1965, *The Fixer* by Bernard Malamud in 1966, *The Chosen* by Chaim Potok in 1967, *Portnoy's Complaint* by Philip Roth in 1969, and *My Name is Asher Lev* by Chaim Potok in 1972. Among non-fiction were *Only in America* by Harry Golden in 1958 and 1959, *The Rothschilds* by Frederic Morton in 1962, *How to be a Jewish Mother* by Dan Greenburg in 1965, *Everything but Money* by Sam Levenson in 1966 and 1967, *Our Crowd* by Stephen Birmingham in 1967, *In One Era and Out the Other* by Sam Levenson in 1973 and 1974.

A cursory glance at what was being transmitted through the content of these books would reveal satirical and stereotyped notions of the American Jewish mother (Roth, Greenburg), introspective and contemplative personal Jewish anguish (Bellow, Roth, Potok), adventure-heroism-martyrdom among European and Israeli Jewry (Uris, Michener, Malamud), profiles of upper-class Jews (Morton, Birmingham) and home-spun Jewish humor (Golden, Levenson).

In regard to individual and collective effects, it would be enlightening to know what, if anything, about the nature and contents of these books was internalized by, and influenced the lives of, their wide Jewish readerships. Sometimes the effect was probably one of strong disagreement (say, about Portnoy's complaints) rather than passive assent. Two journalists who interviewed fifty Jewish housewives have commented in this regard that:

When these wives denounced some of these "trite" and "horribly commercialized" novels being "foisted" on the public, they spoke with characteristic tones of authority. As usual, they had done their homework and had devoured from cover to cover the very novels that they attacked.<sup>17</sup>

Almost in a class by itself among popular Jewish-theme fiction is Leon Uris' *Exodus*, one of the all-time blockbuster best-sellers. It seems that this book probably had a far-reaching effect on American Jews (and non-Jews) in shaping contemporary conceptions of the Holocaust and the founding and importance of Israel. *Exodus* was reported to have been the only novel ever read by the late David Ben-Gurion, because "I

16. Information on best-sellers from 1958-1965 was found in Alice P. Hackett, *Seventy Years of Best Sellers, 1895-1965* (New York: Bowker, 1967). Post-1965 information was found in the volumes of *The Bowker Annual of Library and Book Trade Information*.

17. Gwen G. Schwartz and Barbara Wyden, *The Jewish Wife* (New York: Paperback Library, 1970), p. 208.

wanted to know what influences the Jews of America. I forced myself to read it."<sup>18</sup>

Turning to the movies, we find a romance of long standing between America's Jews and the silver screen. The major studios and moguls of the 1930's and 1940's constituted a "Jewish Hollywood," and the current writer has contended elsewhere that much of the second generation of American Jewry adopted the movies as their major expression and form of popular culture. Jewish children and youth of the 1930's and 1940's "... might or might not have gone to services on Saturday mornings, but they almost always went to the movies on Saturday afternoons."<sup>19</sup>

Despite the decline in heyday movie audiences since the coming of television (from about 80 to 20 million), many Jews seem still to be avid moviegoers. A recent national survey of current moviegoer characteristics indicates that most of the more "frequent" and "occasional" attending adult audience (2/3) tends to have some college education, and to have an annual income of over \$15,000, characteristics that fit adult Jews well.<sup>20</sup> In the two heavily Jewish areas of Los Angeles, 48% of adults in the "Wilshire, Hollywood, Beverly Hills, and Westwood" area, and 32% of adults in the "San Fernando Valley" area, see a movie "once a month or more."<sup>21</sup> A 1966 Politz national survey of 200 Jewish and 200 non-Jewish wives

... singled out movie-going as a distinctly Jewish avocation. Of the Jewish wives, 83.1% said they saw movies once, twice or three times per month, compared with the 54.9% of the non-Jewish wives. Only 15% of the Jewish wives (but 39.1% of the non-Jews) said they didn't go to the movies during a typical month.<sup>22</sup>

What Jewish-related films are Jewish audiences most likely to have seen? As of January 1974, two movies with Jewish themes and characters were among the top fifteen "all-time box office champion films": "The Ten Commandments" (number five) and "Fiddler on the Roof" (number ten).<sup>23</sup> No doubt the visual conceptions held by thousands of American Jews of what both the exodus from Egypt and shtetl life must have been and looked like, have been, to some extent, influenced by these films. Jewish-related films released during 1973 and 1974 included "Jesus Christ Superstar" (Jews around Jesus), "The Way We Were" (Jewish female lead character), "Pete 'n' Tillie" (Jewish male lead character),

18. Quoted in *Time* 102 (December 10, 1973): 62.

19. Norman L. Friedman, "Hollywood, The Jewish Experience, and Popular Culture," *JUDAISM* 19 (Fall, 1970): 487.

20. Personal correspondence information from the Director of Research of the Motion Picture Association of America, 1973.

21. "A Look at Southern California Movie-Going," *Los Angeles Times*, Marketing Research Booklet, 1973, p. 20.

22. Schwartz and Wyden, *Op. cit.*, p. 208.

23. *Variety* 273 (January 9, 1974): 23.

"The Heartbreak Kid" (numerous Jewish characters), "Blazing Saddles" (Jewish Indian chief), "The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz" (numerous Jewish characters), "The Gambler" (Jewish professor/gambler), "Lenny" (Jewish comedian), and "The Godfather—Part II" (Jewish gangster rival). Among other Jewish-related Hollywood films since 1958 have been: "Marjorie Morningstar" (1958), "Middle of the Night" (1959), "Exodus" (1960), "A Majority of One" (1961), "Judgment at Nuremberg" (1961), "The Pawnbroker" (1965), "Cast a Giant Shadow" (1966), "Funny Girl" (1968), "Bye, Bye, Braverman" (1968), "I Love You, Alice B. Toklas" (1968), "The Producers" (1968), "The Fixer" (1968), "Goodbye Columbus" (1969), "The Angel Levine" (1970), and "Portnoy's Complaint" (1972).

Again, there is currently no precise knowledge about the individual and collective effects of these films upon those Jews who have seen them. To be sure, from time to time the content of some of these films has aroused an angry reaction from Jewish leaders, critics, rabbis, or defense agencies, as in the cases of "The Producers," "Goodbye Columbus," "Portnoy's Complaint," "The Heartbreak Kid," "Jesus Christ Superstar," and "The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz." Such criticisms have mainly been that the Jewish characters in these films are made to appear either idiotic, inept, greedy, vulgar, or demonic. While there is no evidence that Jewish masses viewed such films in the same way as did their elite critics, it does seem, as in the case of novels, that what is sometimes the effect of seeing such films is a provoked distaste or angry disagreement, rather than a more passive assent or admiration. In any event, "viewing Jewish" (more Jews probably saw "Fiddler on the Roof" in movie theaters on Friday nights in 1972 and 1973 than attended temples) is an important aspect of Jewish popular culture.

Similarly, there is also television viewing. Here the main presentations that contribute to Jewish popular culture are weekly situation-comedy series with Jewish themes/characters, and the Jewish-related humor of Jewish comedians. Among the top ten Nielsen-rated shows of the 1973 and 1974 seasons with Jewish themes or characters were "All in the Family" and "Maude," which make occasional references to Jews. More significant is the "Rhoda" show, which began in the fall of 1974. The importance of Rhoda and her family as Jewish characters is somewhat blunted by the fact that even though the show has earned high Nielsen ratings, it was a "spinoff" from an already highly popular program, "The Mary Tyler Moore Show." Thus, these Jewish-background characters had an already built-in national audience. Moreover, executives associated with "Rhoda" indicate that they have deliberately attempted to give it a low Jewish-content profile:

The one thing that both Mr. Burns and Mr. Tinker are striving to avoid on *Rhoda* is a too heavy emphasis on the characters' New York

Jewishness. "We don't want to founder in some ethnic sea," Mr. Tinker said. And, added Mr. Burns: "The show is about people—the effect a Jewish mother has on her daughter is universal. It applies to Irish mothers, German mothers, right on down the line."<sup>24</sup>

What has, in effect, occurred, in the view of the current writer, is that they have merely downplayed the display of more explicit and elite aspects of Jewish culture, while certain stock, comic, popular culture Jewish images—marriage-obsession, the overprotective Jewish mother, the dilemma of being overweight and having food cravings—are emphasized. Thus, many Jewish viewers probably watch and make indications to themselves that reinforce or affirm these popular images: "Rhoda's mother is a lot like mine." "Brenda's weight problem is both funny and sad."

In the 1972-73 season, the high-rated "Bridget Loves Bernie" show, since terminated, was the center of considerable official Jewish negative reaction, perhaps as much as there was to the film version of "Jesus Christ Superstar" in 1973. An updated "Abie's Irish Rose," "Bridget Loves Bernie" featured an intermarried couple—Jewish boy/Catholic girl—and their families. Rabbinical and other groups vociferously criticized its praiseful, romanticized, and oversimplified treatment of intermarriage. Again, it is not known whether it elicited a similar negative effect from the masses of American Jews who viewed it. The author has observed groups of Jewish adults watching the show and getting a kick out of the Jewish parents of Bernie (who, interestingly for Jewish popular culture, are portrayed as owning a small kosher-style delicatessen-restaurant), probably because with almost no other Jews regularly portrayed on television series, they could at least identify with the problems and foibles of Bernie's likable parents. These may, of course, not have been typical popular Jewish reactions to, or effects of, the show.

Perhaps more than in series, Jewish popular culture is represented on television by Jewish comedians. Most typically, the contemporary television comedian who uses some "Jewish material" is a "stand-up" comic who (like Alan King or Buddy Hackett) jokes with the audience about his childhood and adolescence, his wife and family, his temple and rabbi. He pokes fun at the foibles of himself and/or other Jews.

According to Altman, the Jewish comedian on television is the cultural prototype of a "comic image" of the Jew that is automatically linked to contemporary humor. Altman systematically viewed the (then) four major television "talk shows," October 30-November 29, 1969, and July 20-August 25, 1970, and recorded comments made by and about Jews by comedians Shecky Greene, Jack Carter, David Steinberg, Shelley Berman, Jan Murray, Myron Cohen, Joan Rivers, and others. He found that

... the humor about the Jew, unlike that about other groups, is either

24. *Broadcasting*, 87 (Oct. 14, 1974): 29.



of the automatic kind, *assuming* the Jew to be funny, or negativistic in evaluation (or self-evaluation). Specifically, this negativism appears in relation to Yiddish, to Jewish religion, and to Jewish inter-personal behavior, which emerges as “foxy.”<sup>25</sup>

### 3. Basic Yiddish

The employment by comedians of Yiddish for comic effect reflects the fact that a passing familiarity with, and use of, a certain minimum of Yiddish expressions, words, and slang—a sort of pop “basic Yiddish”—is also a broad feature of contemporary American Jewish popular culture. The “joys” of Yiddish usages are widely celebrated in media, delicatessen, organization—virtually all settings.

Examples abound. One aspect of basic Yiddish is to know and use the Yiddish words for Jewish foods. The Sunday magazine of the *Los Angeles Times*, for instance, recently included a popular culture-oriented words and illustrations feature, “A Nice Guide for the Goyim to L.A.’s Jewish Community.”<sup>26</sup> One section showed Jewish snacks (“noshes”), like “p’tcha,” and indicated good delicatessen-restaurants where it and other foods could be obtained. A group of Yiddish expressions were given, such as “a gezunt dir in pupik” (translated there as “thanks very little” or “literally: I wish good health to your belly button”). Another section listed “traditional types,” such as the shmendrick, shmegegge, nudnik, klutz, shlimazl, faygeleh, zhlub, nebbish, and krechtzer.

Similarly, a liquor company publishes a booklet of “Familiar Jewish Words and Expressions,” which it distributes free of charge to Jewish organizations. The booklet states that:

For those who may not know that mazel means luck! . . . or the meaning of ganef, schlemiel, kibbitz, etc. . . . today, these and many other Jewish words are adding sparkle to conversation in the smartest circles. . . . We hope you and your friends will find pleasure in these pages, along with your enjoyment of Calvert’s fine products . . . the mayvin’s choice . . .

In the same sense, the following comment by an intermarried Gentile concerning the Yiddish slang he used when meeting his Jewish grandmother-in-law-to-be for the first time, is a not uncommon pop basic Yiddish vocabulary: “I found myself using so many *shleps*, *shmucks*, *kvetches*, *chutzpas* and *meshugges* that my wife had to ask me what the hell I was talking about.”<sup>27</sup>

Thus, in various ways food, media humor, and basic Yiddish frequently come together to influence the Jewish popular culture life his-

25. Sig Altman, *The Comic Image of the Jew: Explorations of a Pop Culture Phenomenon* (Rutherford: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1971), pp. 72–99. For an insightful discussion that suggests at what point Jewish self-parody by comedians and others slips over into Jewish self-hatred and anti-Semitism, see Robert Alter, “Defaming the Jews,” *Commentary* 55 (January, 1973): 77–82.

26. By Marvin Rubin in the *Los Angeles Times West Magazine*, May 21, 1972, 8–9.

27. Owen Edwards, “Confessions of a Gentile,” *New York* 6 (August 29, 1973): 29.

tories and experiences of many individuals. As one writer explained his meanings and motivations, stressing family nostalgia and sentimentality about the past:

I know that I have been raised in a certain tradition that has deep emotional associations. Certain lilts of the voice fill me with warmth and certain Yiddish expressions come readily to my mind to express my feelings. I find Jewish jokes particularly amusing and I "understand" them. Many sorts of food (how important is the connection of Jewishness and food!) give me a Proustian relation to the past and to the world about me. Much of this I connect with my grandparents, now nearly twenty years dead. These feelings and this tradition are deeply related to them and their love as well as to my parents and other members of my family.<sup>28</sup>

It should be noted that Jewish food, media Jewishness, and basic Yiddish come together and criss-cross in Jewish organizations as well as in individual experiences. As to Jewish food, synagogues and Jewish clubs frequently have "lox 'n bagel" brunches, as a Jewish popular culture activity. As to media Jewishness, a Jewish-theme best-seller might be reviewed at an organizational gathering, or a Jewish club chapter or lodge might have a movie party where they collectively see a Jewish-theme film, or a temple men's club might be entertained in-person by a Jewish television comedian. And, to be sure, basic Yiddish is exchanged on many of these and other occasions, a symbol of intragroup solidarity, sociability, and a shared Jewish popular culture bond.

### *Summary*

In this concluding section, eight generalizations will be offered about what appear to be some common features of contemporary American Jewish popular culture.

(1) Jewish popular culture is, in large part, associated with the characteristics of modern "mass society." Media Jewishness, new in Jewish history, depends upon communications technology. The mass media, in turn, widely diffuse media humor and basic Yiddish. Jewish foods are mass produced and marketed. A highly urbanized Jewish population depends for its cultural unity upon mass communication and transportation.

(2) Jewish popular culture is a leisure-time Jewishness. It depends upon a population with the leisure time and income for "eating out" and "going out." Unlike Jewish elite culture, which one needs to "work" for, at, or toward (learning, praying, giving), Jewish popular culture is the non-obligatory leisure Jewishness of play, relaxation, and more spontaneous social participation. As leisure, it constitutes something of an "unofficial" Jewish community, in contrast to the more formal and "se-

28. Kenneth Stern, "Is Religion Necessary?" in Peter Rose, ed., *The Ghetto and Beyond* (New York: Random House, 1969), p. 199.

rious" Jewish community of religious, educational, and welfare endeavors.

(3) For some participants, Jewish popular culture is a supplement to Jewish elite culture, for others it is a substitute form of Jewish identity-maintenance, free of religious, intellectual, or philanthropic encumbrances. For the latter group, Jewish food and basic Yiddish are a modified and undemanding link with tradition, while media Jewishness—through books and movies—allows a vicarious connection with the traditions, history, and current problems of other Jews.

(4) Jewish popular culture is heavily female in the composition of its consumers. Women are involved in greater numbers in Jewish organizations than are men, and in the planning of their elite and popular culture programs. Women tend to buy the books and select the movies. And, of course, women are prominent in the selection and preparation of Jewish foods.

(5) The meanings which people attach to Jewish culture revolve extensively around sociability and nostalgia. Jewish food and basic Yiddish seem to arouse or maintain memories of home, family, and growing up Jewish. Sociability and friendship relations with other Jews—both in and outside of Jewish organizations—are strengthened through conversing about the latest Potok novel, or the latest movie depicting a Jewish mother, or what the Jewish comedian said on television last night, or in sharing a few Yiddish words or expressions with friends.

(6) Jewish popular culture, unlike Jewish elite culture, is "democratic" and individualistically permissive: every person can easily be his or her own Jewish expert and authority. Whatever the person eats, views, or says is acceptable—there is no Jewish elite authority figure (rabbi, scholar) to say that the person's elite knowledge, spirituality, generosity, or sense of justice is good or bad, high or low, present or absent. It is a mass Jewishness where every individual is a king or queen and, by its own lack of external demands, "just as good a Jew as anybody."

(7) Similarly, some organized Jewish associations, and especially the synagogues, are able to exert more control over Jewish popular culture content and activity than are others. Clubs in synagogues, for example, might have Jewish and general American popular culture activities, but at least the rabbi (the authority symbol of Jewish elite culture) is usually around the premises to attempt to encourage Jewish elite culture, and sometimes to draw congregants into Jewish elite culture content by way of the popular (say, with a lox 'n bagel brunch that includes a theological discussion of "The Meaning of Jewish Existence"). By the same token, Jewish welfare and fraternal organizations are less able to exert control over the popular, and Jewish country clubs and fraternities/sororities even less so.

(8) Advocates of Jewish elite culture often sharply criticize Jewish

popular culture as shallow, tasteless, and/or "inauthentic." Jewish popular culture, of course, needs no "advocates"; it is simply what most Jews actually *do*. Jewish elite culture, ever seeking to increase its participants and deepen its influence, more often must go on the offensive against the time which Jews give to Jewish popular culture. Examples abound. A synagogue rabbi might do battle and compete with the forces of general and Jewish popular culture, as reflected in the plot line and rabbi hero-elitist in Rabbi Herbert Tarr's novel *Heaven Help Us!* (1968):

The narrator is a young rabbi who assumes his first post with a suburban congregation, wanting only "to learn, and teach others and . . . do justice, love mercy, and to walk humbly with God." What he finds is a group of business-minded, status-conscious hedonists . . . The theme of the book is the fruitless struggle of the rabbi to institute programs of "adult education" and "social action" in the face of a congregation interested only in bagel-and-lox brunches, weenie roasts, the bowling league, the fund drive for an enlarged kitchen, the temple musical *My Fair Sadie*. . . . Their constant juxtaposition by the author with the rabbi's upright stance leaves a final impression of Jewry-gone-to-pot, but measured by the standard of the Jewish "idea" itself.<sup>29</sup>

Spiritual elitists frequently derogate the large number of Jews for whom religion is supposedly limited to so-called "gastronomical Judaism." Religious elitists speak of manifestations of Jewish popular culture as "inauthentic" expressions of Judaism. One has argued that a "popular Judaism" cannot and should not be made up by Jews as they go along, without knowledge of Jewish law: "That should be, and I think is, the message of the handful of Jews with Jewish knowledge to the masses of those lacking it, including those who occupy positions of responsibility in synagogues and Jewish community organizations."<sup>30</sup> Yiddish elitists and purists call for more extensive and accurate spoken and read Yiddish, usage that appreciates Yiddish's "rooted authenticity," while at the same time hoping that there has been a ". . . demise of the stage vulgarity and master-of-ceremony-obscenity with which Yiddish was so long associated."<sup>31</sup> Another elitist sees the "antics" of some Jewish comedians on television as a "travesty" of authentic Jewish memories, and warns that:

Reversing this vulgarity will not be easy. But if ecology can be applied to polluted rivers and the air, it may work for "pop" culture as well.<sup>32</sup>

As a final illustration, the following elite commentator blasts an alleged vulgarity and "grossness" that he finds both in some best-selling Jewish novelists and in the Jewish "masses" in general:

Protagonists of Judaism should no more be required to defend its vulgarization than lovers of literature must justify every semi-pornographic

29. Altman, *Op. cit.*, pp. 112-113.

30. Jacob Neusner, "Popular Judaism," *Jewish Spectator* 38 (March, 1973): 27.

31. Jacob A. Fishman, "Yiddish for the People!," *JUDAISM* 20 (Spring, 1971): 219-220.

32. Sanford Pinsker, "Jewish Pop Culture," *Jewish Spectator* 38 March 1973): 20.

bid for best-sellerdom. Perhaps there should be a correlation between a high spiritual calling and an elevated taste. The grossness which characterizes much of the American Jewry is but one of its many failings which any honest leader will readily acknowledge. But the intrinsic worth of Judaism—that inveterate minority faith—must, in days of non-observance, be judged more by its ideals than by its pop culture. Not the idolatrous masses of the Divided Kingdom but the handful of prophets who spoke to them determined what was Judaism...<sup>33</sup>

How should these accusations be regarded? In a spirit of cultural relativity, the current author will not digress here into a discussion of whether contemporary American Jewish popular culture represents vulgarity or vitality, or whether it should be pitied or praised. It should be observed, however, that the current state of Jewish survival and Jewish identification in America is probably at least as much, if not more, the product of Jewish popular culture than of Jewish elite culture. The sociologist of American Jewry, therefore, must not overlook Jewish popular culture as an important source of information and insight.

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33. Eugene B. Borowitz, "Believing Jews and Jewish Writers: Is Dialogue Possible?" *JUDAISM* 14 (Spring, 1965): 182.



# *Orthodoxy With Moderation:* *A Sketch of Joseph Herman Hertz*

SEFTON TEMKIN

THE WORKADAY ROUTINE OF THE JEWISH COMMUNITY in which the writer was growing up was agog with a week-end visit from the Chief Rabbi. Two species of Jewish ecclesiastics had, until then, entered his consciousness. There were ministers. Known as "Reverend," they were clean shaven, wore Roman collars, officiated in robes and silk taleisim, and preached in English with the over-refined accents of men who had laboured at their elocution lessons. Then there were rabbis, bearded, garbed in long woollen taleisim, their faces rarely visible because they spent their time swaying toward the Eastern wall, their speeches incomprehensible because they were couched in a foreign jargon. But the Chief Rabbi fitted neatly into neither of the two categories. He was called "The Chief Rabbi," but, also, "The Very Reverend." He wore a Roman collar, but, also, a beard. He officiated in a robe more elaborate than that of the ministers because it was embellished with a purple stole and cummerbund, but superimposed on the robe was a long woollen tallis. He spoke English, though in a strange accent, his voice extremely harsh, not gently modulated, and apt to go from a rasping whisper to an explosive crescendo.

If the child was puzzled over this combination, he was taken aback by actions which he had observed neither in ministers nor in rabbis. When the Chief Rabbi entered the pulpit he began by seizing the large tasseled cushion which surmounted it and flinging it contemptuously to the floor behind him. While he was preaching, a harmless old man quietly entered and wandered forward. The Chief Rabbi let him do so, and then stopped dead, pointed a scornful finger, and hissed, "If people must come in late they needn't push to the front."

Then he began to hear stories: how the dignitaries of the community, attired in shining top hats and immaculate morning coats, had lined up at the railway station to await his arrival, and how, when asked to meet them, the Chief Rabbi had barked, "I wanna meet nobody," and left them standing.

Years went by. The writer entered a university and took part in the activities of Jewish students, who, generally, had to make their own entertainment. What more obvious means than by mimicking the eld-

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ers of the community, and who a better candidate for mimicry than the Chief Rabbi; his high office, his harsh accent and his explosive epigrammatic phrases singled him out. He continued to retain contact with organized Jewish life and had occasion to meet the Chief Rabbi and to learn more about his personality and the struggles in which he was involved. Finally, he remembers walking with him at a seaside resort during Sukkot of 1945. Hertz was already a sick man and the catastrophe that had overwhelmed European Jewry bore him down. Yet the fire remained. His reminiscences were vigorous, and his conversation still sparkled. Tales about Solomon Schechter and Louis Marshall, experiences in South Africa, the literary riches of the English language. The name of Leo Baeck, who had just settled in England, was mentioned. "Baeck," Hertz ejaculated, "he goes in for *misticism*—*misticism* with an "I." Hertz liked the clear-cut statement.

Joseph Herman Hertz was born at Pebrin in Northeast Hungary, (now Czechoslovakia), on 25 September, 1872. His father, Simon Hertz, came of a family who apparently acted as factors for the local landowners.<sup>1</sup> Simon had attended the modernized yeshivah set up in Eisenstadt by Israel Hildesheimer, and received from him a diploma testifying to his fitness to act as a rabbi. It may not be far-fetched to trace the influence of Hildesheimer in the cultured Orthodoxy later espoused by Joseph Herman. At all events, Simon Hertz betrayed none of the narrowness sometimes associated with Hungarian Orthodoxy. In 1882, he published a volume of Hebrew poems,<sup>2</sup> and three years later, driven by poverty, he migrated to the United States. On the Lower East Side of New York he eked out a subsistence as a *melamed*, but, though poverty-stricken, he had an interest in the fine things of life, and out of this crucible emerged a family of strong-willed, able children. The eldest son, Emanuel, became a well known lawyer and is believed to have declined a Federal judgeship. He was famous, in his day, as one of the great authorities on Abraham Lincoln.<sup>3</sup> Another brother, who became a dentist, was a great Sinologist; he built up both a collection of Chinese antiques and a famous stamp collection. While they were still impoverished students, Joseph Herman and his brother Emanuel took out a subscription to the Metropolitan Opera which is still in the family.

Joseph Herman first attended Public School No. 4 on the Lower East Side and then City College, where he was president of the Brown-ing Society and received a gold medal for English composition, thus

1. Simon Hertz died shortly before his son's installation as Chief Rabbi. An obituary notice in *The Jewish Chronicle* (London) for 28 March, 1913, writes of the family as having been landowners in Hungary.

2. *Sefer Avne*. When in America he published *Torat S'fat Ever*, A Hebrew Grammar, (New York, 1904).

3. Emanuel Hertz (1870–1940), see *Encyclopedia Judaica*, VIII, 398; *New York Times*, 24 May, 1940.

evidencing the interest in literature which became manifest in his writing. His Hebrew studies were directed by his father. One family story has it that the child was too studious even for Orthodox parents from the Old World, and that out of their limited resources they bought him a baseball bat so that he should get some exercise. But he preferred to stay in the room while his father taught Talmud to his elder brother. Another tradition in the family is that the father, seeing religious conditions in America, had no desire for his son to become a rabbi, but wanted him to become an engineer. But family tradition was even stronger that the Hertz children were strong-willed, and Joseph Herman was in the first class to enter the newly established Jewish Theological Seminary of New York.

Of the eight students who made up that first class, Hertz was the only one to stay the course, and, in 1894, the day came for him to be ordained. The conferment of the diploma was a precedent-making event, and the Seminary needed to decide what form the ordination was to take. The traditional *hattarat haro-eh* includes as essential, operative words the formula *yoreh yoreh, yadin yadin*—"Let him teach and decide in matters of law"—and for eleven years Hebrew Union College had conferred ordination in the Orthodox form. The leaders of JTS decided otherwise. The diploma given to Hertz does not include this formula; it corresponds to no previously existing form and, in all probability, was devised by Sabato Morais for the occasion. According to Dr. Mordecai Kaplan—the sole survivor of this period of the Seminary's history—the absence of instruction in subjects essential for *hattarat haro-eh* was the basis for the decision.<sup>4</sup>

But a precedent was set. Since then, although the Seminary has the power to ordain rabbis, its graduates receive merely the "degree of rabbi, preacher and teacher."

That, however, is not the end of the story. Did Hertz, though eventually occupying one of the world's major rabbinical offices, lack the qualification usually bestowed on a *yeshiva bahur*? Dr. Kaplan recalls that, in 1896, he noticed a number of Orthodox rabbis, not connected with the Seminary, walking to the top floor of the building. Asked what they were doing there, he was told that they had come to examine Dr. Hertz for his *hattarat haro-eh*.<sup>5</sup> Hertz must have studied privately for this diploma, and in those days the relations between the Seminary and the Orthodox rabbinate were satisfactory enough for the *rabbanim*

4. Communication to author: Evidently the question of giving instruction in these subjects had been considered by the leaders of the Seminary at one stage. See Herbert Parzen, *Architects of Conservative Judaism* (New York: Jonathan David, 1964), p. 20.  
5. In a letter to Mr. J. Goldreich of Johannesburg (March 31, 1898) Hertz wrote: "I am a graduate of the Orthodox rabbinical school, the Jewish Theological Seminary of New York. I have furthermore a Hattaras Horah, or Rabbinical Diploma, from six authorized rabbis."

to examine one of the Seminary's men on the Seminary's premises. When he left America in 1913, he declared, "I shall always consider myself a post-graduate of the Theological Seminary because its ideals and teachings shall always be mine."<sup>6</sup> As important as the wording inscribed on the rabbi's diploma is the spirit which his teachers infused within him.

The circumstances which led to the opening, in 1887, of the Jewish Theological Seminary have been related elsewhere. Within the established American Jewish community (as opposed to the growing community of East European immigrants) the tide had been flowing in the direction of Reform, often a radical kind. This prompted an assorted group of traditionalists, some of whom would today be described as Orthodox, others as Conservative, to establish the Jewish Theological Seminary of New York, at which rabbis loyal to tradition would be trained.<sup>7</sup> There was a coalition between "those who desired to perpetuate the Jewish tradition but could not themselves observe the details of Jewish practice as codified in the Shulhan Arukh; and those who accepted and desired to observe Judaism as prescribed and codified by the Shulhan Arukh."<sup>8</sup> What also distinguished them was a social and cultural distance from the Yiddish-speaking immigrants who had recently settled on the shores of America.

It was by men of this school—Alexander Kohut, Henry Pereira Mendes, Sabato Morais—that Hertz was trained for the rabbinate. What alchemy of forces produces a man's personality and outlook is a difficult question, but it probably was the Pittsburgh Platform of 1885 that inspired both his lifelong antipathy to "Classical" Reform—that "German-American mutation of Judaism," as he was fond of describing it—and his readiness to find a *modus vivendi* with lovers of the tradition less Orthodox than himself. Equally, what he saw on the Lower East Side of New York taught him that not every one of the details brought over from the Old World was an essential part of the tradition. As a young rabbi, he denounced both extremes in unequivocal terms. He pictured Judaism in America as a ship sailing on a boisterous ocean, the captain gone. "One side, suspicious and helplessly ignorant, does nothing. . . . Many, again regret that they at all belong to the vessel."<sup>9</sup>

6. *New York Times*, March 3, 1913, p. 9.

7. The fullest account of the circumstances leading to the establishment of the Jewish Theological Seminary is to be found in Moshe Davis, *The Emergence of Conservative Judaism* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1962). Reference should be made also to Herbert Parzen, *Architects of Conservative Judaism* (New York: Jonathan David, 1964).

8. Davis, *Op. cit.*, p. 231.

9. Sermon "Judaism's Struggle," preached before Congregation Anshe Emeth, Cleveland, Ohio, on July 10, 1898. See *The American Hebrew*, LXI (July 24, 1896): 295-6. It appears that he was in Cleveland as part of a delegation soliciting support for the Seminary.

The ship was threatened by "radicalism" and "fanaticism." Of the former he observed that

the rabbi's whim of the moment, the congregation's passing fancy are the only basis . . . for the fashionable Judaism in our larger cities . . . our age . . . crushed under foot the tender blossoms of poetry and faith . . . Its motto is, "What will not die of itself, kill."

But the synagogues of the recent immigrants showed a condition not much more encouraging.

With the noise, the disorder, the lack of harmony and dignity in their services they repel rather than attract . . . Ignorant of the past and blind to the future, fanaticism knows not the blessings of peace and union. Without the onslaughts of Radicalism, it does nothing, nothing. . .<sup>10</sup>

And he concluded, "suicide is not progress, neither is uncultured progress Judaism."<sup>11</sup>

The specific problem varied with time and place, but it is not difficult to see this thread reappearing throughout Hertz's career. ". . . the golden mean in Judaism," "religious advance without loss of traditional values," "the task, nay, the duty, of religious adjustment" are phrases which came from his lips while Chief Rabbi. A few years before, in the course of an attack on religious radicalism, he had spoken of the need "of thinking anew and acting anew so as to make Orthodoxy a synonym of progress without loss of essential values."<sup>12</sup>

Even before his ordination, Hertz was appointed to Congregation Adath Yeshurun, Syracuse, a congregation formed in 1870 through a secession from an older Orthodox group in the town. In 1878, it built a modest house of worship which included a balcony for the ladies. Later, the ladies moved downstairs.<sup>13</sup> Apparently, mixed seating was the rule by the time Hertz began his ministry.<sup>14</sup> Prior to his appointment, the congregation had been ministered to by a hazzan and a shammash; the members now wanted a rabbi who could preach to them in English, and, according to Bernard Drachman (1851–1945), Hertz's teacher and, later, his rival in seeking the British Chief Rabbinate, Hertz's eloquence took them by storm.<sup>15</sup>

The young rabbi also began to become known outside Syracuse. He spoke for the Jewish Theological Seminary; he wrote in support of the Zionist Congress; helped establish the first Zionist Society in Syracuse, and took part in the foundation of the Federation of American Zionists;

10. *Loc. cit.*

11. *Ibid.*, p. 297.

12. *Affirmations of Judaism* (London: Oxford University Press, 1927), p. 129.

13. B. G. Rudolph, *From Minyan to A Community: A History of the Jews of Syracuse* (Syracuse: University Press, 1970), p. 83.

14. Recollection of Dr. Louis Finkelstein, whose father was a rabbi in Syracuse contemporaneously with Hertz.

15. *The Unfailing Light* (New York: Rabbinical Council of America, 1948), pp. 222, 223.



he took part also in the establishment of the Union of Orthodox Hebrew Congregations, preaching at a service held in connection with its inaugural convention and joining its first board of trustees;<sup>16</sup> he became a member of the first board of Bible translators set up by the Jewish Publication Society of America.<sup>17</sup>

With the vast opportunities of the burgeoning Jewish community of America before him, why did he go to far-off South Africa? Whatever the explanation, the fact that he chose to do so shows some singularity of character. Today, New York is twenty-four hours from Johannesburg, but it is 9,000 miles away, and, in 1898, the difficult journey meant exile from home. Syracuse was no Athens, but Johannesburg was a raw, rootless city brought into being by the discovery of gold ten years earlier, ruled by the dour Calvinistic farmers of the Transvaal and inhabited by a motley crowd who had flocked thither in the hope of easy riches. Had he gone to a mining town in Utah he would have been no worse off, and a good deal nearer home.

Rather than bend the knee to the Baal of Reform Judaism, (he wrote while still in Johannesburg), I was willing to exile myself to the ends of the earth, to a storm-center of materialism, away from the stimulating . . . atmosphere of books and men and movements. True, that financially my position leaves little to be desired, but *lo al halechem levado*. . .<sup>18</sup>

"Rather than bend the knee to the Baal of Reform Judaism." There we have the dilemma of one such as Hertz in the American Jewry of the 1890's, and, indeed, of the Conservative rabbi or English-speaking Orthodox one for three decades thereafter. He was not a Yiddish-speaking *rav* of the East European school, with credentials from a well known Yeshivah that would command the allegiance of the immigrant section of the community. And to those who wanted, above all, a preacher in English his Orthodoxy was a barrier.

It is not far-fetched to suppose that in Syracuse the tone was set by the Reform Temple and that at least some members of Congregation Adath Yeshurun were looking over their shoulders at what the larger and more affluent Reform group was doing. Hertz must have seen that, for his style of Judaism, the American situation had limitations which set barriers to any immediate prospects of advancement. This was certainly true of the position in Syracuse. Philip Cowen, publisher of the *American Hebrew*, who acted as liaison with the Johannesburg congregation in later years threw some light on the position.

16. The sermon, "The Jew in Public Life," appeared in *The American Hebrew*, LXII (July 1, 1898): 262.

17. The "Preface" to the Jewish Publication Society's 1917 translation of the Scriptures lists him as having prepared a translation of the Book of Joshua for the Society.  
18. ["Not by bread alone"] in the course of a letter dated September 11, 1906, to the Rev. Meldola de Sola, of Montreal.

Syracuse was no fertile field for Orthodox Judaism. The elders bothered little about the young folks, and Hertz knew that the future rested with them. But they were little interested religiously. Hertz, at his own expense, put into the hands of the young men and women literature that tended to give them an acquaintance with and love for the Jew and Judaism. Better opportunities financially offered themselves, but Hertz felt that here was his field, even though the requital was small. At my insistence, Hertz accepted the call to South Africa and made his mark in short order.<sup>19</sup>

The transformation in Hertz's career came suddenly in 1898. The Witwatersrand Hebrew Congregation had been ministered to by ecclesiastics of uncertain qualifications, and now, as one of its representatives wrote privately, it wanted a spiritual leader who "should belong to a higher class, socially and intellectually, than those previously holding the position." The published announcement read:

Wanted a Jewish minister for the Witwatersrand Old Hebrew Congregation, Johannesburg, South Africa . . . Qualifications necessary: Rabbinical diploma; university training and degree; Mohel; speak English; good appearance; under 45 years of age; married; fluent preacher; irreproachable character; be competent to lead in all humanitarian projects, and command the respect of all; . . . American experience preferable; large sphere of labour; Congregation Orthodox but mixed choir. . . .<sup>20</sup>

Note that this congregation in far-away South Africa advertised "American experience preferable." If the members had connections with any one country, it was England, but the Anglo-Jewish ministry had no reputation for energy or initiative, and to cope with conditions in Johannesburg someone accustomed to the rough and tumble of the United States would be more than satisfactory. They did not put matters in such crude terms, but a letter to Cowen makes it clear that a congregation of pioneers was looking for someone who would give them social tone.<sup>21</sup>

The Johannesburg congregation appointed an American committee to advise, and on August 10th resolved to appoint Hertz.<sup>22</sup> He packed his bags quickly, sailing for England on the 13th, and leaving England for Capetown on the 24th.

Some of the correspondence which passed between the two countries in connection with this appointment has survived,<sup>23</sup> and it exhibits

19. *Memories of An American Jew* (New York: The International Press, 1932), p. 402.

20. This advertisement appeared in *The Jewish Chronicle* (London), as well as in *The American Hebrew*, XXIII (June 17, 1898): 198. The specifying of "mixed choir" is to be understood by reference to conditions in England. A choir which included female singers (Jewish, of course) was the limit of the deviations from past practice tolerated by the rabbinate there.

21. *The American Hebrew* (June 17, 1898).

22. Extract from *Souvenir of the Decennial Celebration of the Witwatersrand Old Hebrew Congregation*, 1898, communicated to the writer by G. Saron, General Secretary of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies.

23. When, at a later date, the Johannesburg congregation was clearing out its files, these papers were taken away by a wastepaper dealer. He happened to note the sig-

a remarkable consensus that Hertz was the one man in America able to fill South Africa's requirements.

The situation confronting Hertz in Johannesburg must, indeed, have called for a man "competent to lead in all humanitarian projects." He found himself in a community which, though barely ten years old, had experienced two secessions.<sup>24</sup> That would have been nothing surprising to him. Worse, hostility between English and Dutch was smoldering. The government of the South African Republic, under Paul Kruger, was determined to keep the foreigners, or Uitlanders, as they were called, deprived of political power, and denied them naturalization. An imperialist government in London was determined that Britain should be the paramount power in South Africa. Evidently, what he saw on the spot made Hertz change his opinions. Shortly after his arrival, he wrote to Bertha Szold, daughter of Rabbi Benjamin Szold, whom he was wooing at that time:

Would you believe it, my dear Miss Bertha, I know you won't—but I have become an imperialist. And not an imperialist from hope of plunder, but from conviction.<sup>25</sup>

He entered into the fray by delivering an outstanding oration at a great meeting of Uitlanders, called to protest against their disabilities.

In October, 1899, war with England broke out. Hertz did not withhold his protests against the disabilities suffered by Jews, and for his pains was promptly expelled from the country. Almost simultaneously, a British war correspondent two years younger than he made his escape from Boer custody; so the Capetown newspaper bore the headings in adjoining lines, "Dr. Hertz Expelled—Mr. Churchill Escapes." Hertz was put on a train made up of cattle trucks going to Portuguese East Africa, and it was on the same train that Churchill secreted himself. When the train stopped at a wayside station, Hertz got out for water and collapsed into Winston Churchill's arms.

He made his way to England and then home to the United States. In England he made the acquaintance of Solomon Schechter, on whom he made a deep impression.<sup>26</sup> Schechter was strongly opposed to the Boer War, but the young American living in South Africa seems to have main-

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nificance and passed them on to a member of the local Jewish community, who made them over to Dr. Hertz. They are now in the possession of Mr. Samuel Hertz (London).  
24. See his article "Johannesburg" in *The Jewish Encyclopedia* (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1904), VII, 217.

25. A. L. Levin, *Desire to be Different* (New York: Bloch, 1972), p. 252.

26. Before it was destroyed by fire, the writer saw in the Cyrus Adler collection at The Jewish Theological Seminary a postcard written by Schechter to Adler in 1900, to this effect:

Yesterday your Dr. Hertz called to see me. We disagreed violently on the Boer War, but if he is a sample of the kind of man your Seminary produces it must be a very fine institution indeed.

tained his imperialist convictions and expressed them in lectures and statements in America.

His congregation had been dispersed by the war, but Hertz returned to them in 1901. Johannesburg had come under British rule, and Hertz served as a member of the advisory council of the High Commissioner, Sir Alfred Milner, and as professor of Philosophy at the University of the Witwatersrand. He was one of the founders, in 1903, of what later became the South African Jewish Board of Deputies. The rawness of the scene must have been disturbing, especially after he had married, and, in 1906, when the pulpit of the New West End Synagogue, London's most distinguished Orthodox congregation, fell vacant, he wished to be considered for the position, but the appointment went elsewhere. He remained in Johannesburg for another five years, and then returned to New York as rabbi of Congregation Orach Chayim.

Orach Chayim had been founded in 1880, and in 1906 had established itself on Lexington Avenue between 94th and 95th Streets. Therefore, it was near Harlem, then a fashionable Jewish neighbourhood. The congregation was strictly Orthodox; indeed, in those days, it had a rule which made only Sabbath observers eligible for membership. However, its *minhag* and its tone differed from those of the great majority of Orthodox synagogues in America, since it had been founded by German Jews and conformed to their style.

Hertz was installed on January 13, 1912, but Orach Chayim proved only a way station. By then, Herman Adler, the British Chief Rabbi, had died on July 18th, and Hertz was being canvassed as a possible successor.<sup>27</sup> During the twelve months that he served in New York, the movement for the establishment of the United Synagogue of America was taking shape and Hertz played some part in the discussions. According to one version, he suggested the name. Almost his last act before leaving for England was to speak at its inaugural convention.

It is unnecessary to underline the change in position which Hertz underwent—from rabbi of a single unimportant congregation to Chief Rabbi over a far-flung diocese. The existence of the office responded to differences in the development of two communities in the English-speaking world, each of which came into being in the middle of the 17th century. In America, congregational independence was the basic principle; only after much agitation and emphatic guarantees of undiminished independence were congregations persuaded to join together for limited purposes. National organizations did eventually proliferate, but, like the local congregations in their sphere, emphasized their independence of each other.

27. Oddly enough, Orach Chayim did become the sanctuary for Moses Hyamson, Hertz's defeated rival for the British Chief Rabbinate. He took over the seat which Hertz vacated and remained there for thirty eccentric years.

Another great feature of the development of the American Jewish community was the growth of the Reform movement. During the 19th century, many congregations which had been Orthodox modified their practices in the direction of Reform. We may see parallels among the Christians in the changeover from Calvinism to Unitarianism in the congregational churches and the modification of strict Lutheran doctrine on American soil.

In England, events followed a different path. The State did not interfere with the affairs of the Jewish community, and there was nothing in the nature of the logically organized consistorial structure which Napoleon imposed upon the Jews of France. However, the presence of the Church of England, the one State Church, enjoying national recognition and retaining its ancient rituals, was influential, and the idea of a united Jewish community was somehow always floating around. Not that there was any single over-all organization. There were a number of institutions, principally the Chief Rabbinate, the Board of Deputies of British Jews, and the London United Synagogue, no one of them completely comprehensive in the sphere it regarded as its own, sometimes bickering with each other, but usually managing to coordinate their activities because the individuals concerned set great store on communal unity. This rested on the influence of a few leading families. At their head stood the first Lord Rothschild (1840–1915), gruff, despotic, prominent in society, a pillar of London's financial world, generous and devoted to his fellow Jews. He was ready to describe himself as "lay head of the Anglo-Jewish community" and, more remarkable, the rest of the community accepted his rule.

Well might a man have contrasted the anarchy of New York with the self-discipline of London.

The other distinguishing feature of Anglo-Jewish life was the way its institutions remained anchored to Orthodox Judaism. A Reform congregation, conducted on very conservative lines, had opened in 1842 amid great bitterness. The movement did not spread, and, as the social relationships of its members to the majority of the community were more significant than the theological distinctions between the lukewarm Orthodoxy of one congregation and the moderate Reform of the other, the general pattern was not disturbed.

That this pattern was established again may be due to the example of the Church of England. If, for the Christians, every parish had an official church with an official ritual and an official prayer book, then the Jews must have one also. Dissent could not be suppressed but, somehow, it was not the proper thing.

Social and intellectual changes did produce demand for reform, but the official synagogue defused them by polishing up its externalities. Up until the Reform schism of 1842, the Chief Rabbi had been a *lam-*

*dan* of the old-fashioned yeshivah type. Concerned with the need for renovation, the community then appointed Nathan Marcus Adler, who united a German University doctorate with his rabbinical qualifications. In 1847, he issued what were entitled "Laws and Regulations for the Government of All the Synagogues of the British Empire," designed to put down abuses in the conduct of the service. Under his son and successor, Herman Adler, the process was continued.

The *piyyutim* were curtailed or abolished; choral singing was encouraged; where not required by the *din* the discontinuance of repetitions was allowed, as was the introduction of occasional prayers in English; instrumental music was allowed on weekdays, which meant that the bride could take her place under the *huppah* to the strains of Wagner's Wedding March. (The question whether there should be a *huppah* at all, which, one gathers from the Lenn Report, is a crucial issue for the American Reform rabbinate, never seems to have occurred to these benighted denizens of the Old World.) Equally important, the conduct of funerals was spruced up. All in all, they managed to fashion something that was reasonably acculturated to contemporary society without infringing Jewish law. Not everybody admitted himself completely satisfied; no one was violently dissatisfied, either.

But let it not be thought that all was sweetness and light. The compromises had been effected within the Anglicized section of the community. As in the United States, a second community had arisen, since 1882, through large-scale migration from Eastern Europe. The newcomers differed from the older settlers in language, economic position and religious background. They wanted the *minhag* and the fervor to which they had been accustomed, not the restrained style of the English synagogue, a bearded *rav* rather than a clean-shaven cleric in a Roman collar. There were heavy strains between the two sections, but never a breach.<sup>28</sup>

A reading of the press of the time indicates intense interest in the election of a successor to Herman Adler. To Lord Rothschild it was essential that the Chief Rabbi should be English, a man of dignity who would stand on a par with the Bishops of the Established Church and help to civilize the uncouth foreigners by the example of a cultivated Judaism that yet remained within the bounds of Orthodoxy. But the "uncouth foreigners," as the English Jews regarded their immigrant brothers, had their own idea what a *rav* should be. Expertise in the Talmud was the hallmark of authority, and too much secular culture

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28. Here an important contrast with the United States may be noted. In England the synagogue, including the Chief Rabbinate, remained the link between the native and immigrant communities; in the United States, because one group was Reform and the other Orthodox, it was a dividing line.



engendered the suspicion of a deficiency in the thing that really mattered. The "foreign rabbis" (as they were disdainfully referred to) resented the whole institution of a Chief Rabbinate, and were prepared to argue that it was against Jewish law. How real was the danger of a breach, and how it was averted, is hidden from view, but apparently there was a compromise; the middle asserted itself over the extremes. Here, the outlook which made the United States such a limited field for Hertz, made him acceptable to the leaders of the Anglo-Jewish community, and here was a community which would be responsive to the form of Orthodoxy he stood for. His education and upbringing had been in the West, but he had ties with Yiddish-speaking Jewry through having grown up in New York. He was not British, but the pro-British stand he had taken in South Africa and the recommendation that it had brought from Alfred Milner must have appealed to imperialists like Rothschild. Moreover, he was a man of energy, of fresh force, whose personality might encourage the Young Turks to hope that the cobwebs of the Adler regime would be blown away.

The thirty-three years of Hertz's Chief Rabbinate cover a sad transformation of the Jewish scene, as well as of the world scene in general, but it is not difficult to visualize the envy of his American colleagues as Hertz set sail for England. In 1913, the world was at peace, the British Empire was at the zenith of its power and influence, and the affairs of the world were dominated by Europe. England, itself, was paradise for the middle classes: taxes low, food cheap, communications rapid, servants plentiful, education good. The Jewish community was not large, nor was it significant for its religious life and scholarship, but it was treated with respect by the State, while being entirely free from State control. It was led by men of social distinction and was organized on a voluntary basis, yet with a high degree of self-discipline. Its shortcomings in the matter of cultural life could be compensated for by proximity to the centres of learning on the continent of Europe (Berlin and Vienna were a twenty-four hours' journey from London) and by the prestige which it enjoyed through being at the heart of a mighty empire.

That world of comparative ease disappeared in 1914, and henceforth Hertz's Chief Rabbinate was exercised in an atmosphere of strain—wartime emergencies, peacetime confusions. The First World War gave Hertz the opportunity to play an influential role in the securing of the Balfour Declaration. He was not a member of Weizmann's group which negotiated with representatives of the British government, but the forthright stand of the Chief Rabbi at a moment when the principal figures in the Anglo-Jewish community were hostile helped to tip the

scales in favor of the Declaration.<sup>29</sup> The First World War began a process of shifting westwards the center of gravity in Jewish life. The Inter-War years were an Indian summer of the British Empire, for political and economic reasons; Berlin and Vienna ceased to be influential. England held the mandate for Palestine. Hence, London became more of an international Jewish center, and the position of its Chief Rabbi was correspondingly enhanced. This was particularly the case in the years from 1933 to 1939, when the task of coordinating the effort to mitigate the effects of the onslaught of the Nazis devolved on the leaders of the Anglo-Jewish community. Hertz rose to the occasion and was unflinching in his defense of Jewish rights. He maintained his contacts with all sections of Jewry and gave a world-wide status to his office.

In the domestic affairs of the Anglo-Jewish community, he maintained a firm rule but, save for his books, his constructive achievements were less. For one thing, there was a preoccupation with external pressures. For another, his bellicosity often proved to be self-defeating.

The legal powers vested in the Chief Rabbi are limited, and the authority he exercises depends largely on habit, persuasion and force of personality. A community which, under Adler, had become accustomed to episcopal reserve was not stirred by a touch of American hustle and a new fierceness of manner.

There is no suggestion that in his American career Hertz had left any impression of aggressiveness—but what was taken for granted in New York might cause gasps of consternation in London. Though not lacking shrewdness, he was direct rather than subtle, and one suspects that he made up his mind that he would never rule a contentious flock unless he seized every opportunity to demonstrate that he was boss. At the time of his appointment, there was some expectation that he might reorganize the ecclesiastical system so that other rabbis might share in the religious government of the community; he made no move in that direction. He took readily to the external accoutrements of his office, being careful to dress for the role of Jewish Bishop, and he became very assertive where he suspected an infringement of its prerogatives.

He was impetuous and volcanic. A man of peace? Well, it was said that Hertz was always ready for a peaceful solution to any problem—when all other means failed. To those who smote him he did not turn the other cheek. He did not love his enemies, or even pretend to.

When his wife died and he was observing the week of mourning, a leader of Right-Wing Orthodoxy, who had often been at loggerheads with Hertz, made the usual condolence call. The room was crowded, with one empty seat opposite the Chief Rabbi's. Diffidently, the caller

29. A passage in Sokolow's *History of Zionism*, vol. II, p. 45, written contemporaneously with the Balfour Declaration, gives a rather restrained appreciation of Hertz's Zionism at this period.

remained standing by the door. The Chief Rabbi turned his head and caught sight of him. Immediately he pointed to the empty chair facing him and growled, "Goodman, sit there; I like to look my enemies straight in the face."

Unfortunately, a man of this personality was compelled to live with another of equally self-assertive disposition. Robert Waley Cohen, a member of one of the community's oldest families, developed into a kind of *Nasi* when the rule of the Rothschilds faded away with the First World War.<sup>30</sup> Waley Cohen was one of the quartet who built up the vast Shell International Oil empire, and his phenomenal energies enabled him to engage in a vast array of business and public duties besides. As Hertz was small, Waley Cohen was huge. From this giant emerged a voice that was gentle and smooth, while the diminutive Hertz was sharp and rasping. Waley Cohen had no sense of any limitations on his right to expect his opinion to be followed; Hertz had definite opinions as to the prerogatives of his office. When the present writer came to know them, their combats were a matter of hearsay, but they watched each other like two battle-scarred tom cats, purring, yet liable to hiss, their claws concealed in fur, yet ready to be extended if a real or imagined attack from the other was signalled. The studied non-belligerency of this pair was as fascinating to watch as their explosions, but it did no good to the Anglo-Jewish community, and this lack of harmony was a major frustration in Hertz's Chief Rabbinate.

But the self-assertiveness was peppery rather than crabby, and, united with a wide knowledge of the world and a fine power of expression, it made for an attractive personality. And when he did not feel the need to defend his office another side emerged. He was very indulgent to the young; he would allow the youthful members of his family to tease him without restraint. Once, when living in Cambridge, he addressed a bar mizvah boy from the pulpit of the University Synagogue without having been invited to do so by the officers. The students in whom the control of the synagogue was vested took very seriously this invasion of their prerogatives, and on the morrow of the Sabbath a deputation of undergraduates solemnly waited on the Chief Rabbi to inform him that he was not entitled to occupy their pulpit without their invitation. Hertz accepted the rebuke meekly, promised not to repeat the offense and gave them something to drink. Provincial dignitaries, such as those whose pomposity he had deflated at the railway station, would have been surprised to see this side of his personality.

Hertz was a man of strong convictions, though not an original think-

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30. Robert Henriques' *Sir Robert Waley Cohen, 1877-1953* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1966), gives an indication of some of the quarrels between Hertz and Waley Cohen.

er. He did not engage in scholarly research, but he had a vigorous enquiring mind which was constantly refreshed by broad and diligent reading. He was an exceptionally well-organized man, so that the fruits of his reading were always accessible to him, and his sermons and addresses show a great knack of dove-tailing text, Midrash and contemporary situation. Along with his passionate feeling there was a shrewd insight as to what his community would accept.

Hesitations arise as to his religious position, and the question is asked whether he was Orthodox or really Conservative. To use such labels is to introduce the denominational differences of American Jewry into a world where they had no meaning, it being remembered that our interpretation of these labels is usually a reaction to contemporary externalities. The question of "mixed seating" did not arise in Europe, not even among German congregations which were classed as Liberal. The use of the organ on Sabbaths was taken for granted in France, a religious dividing line in Germany, and not raised in England. The position of the *bema* was a shibboleth for Orthodoxy in Hungary but not in England or America.

Episodes in Hertz's own career show that, in his early days, the waters had not yet divided into the streams that we assume always to have existed. Of his Seminary teachers, some served Orthodox and others non-Orthodox congregations. His first congregation had deviated from the Orthodox norm by allowing mixed seating. His New York congregation carried the strictness of its Orthodoxy into the lives of its members beyond the confines of the synagogue by insisting that they observe the Sabbath.

To adopt Anglican phraseology, Hertz adhered to a Broad Church Orthodoxy. His Chief Rabbinate had to serve as an umbrella for heterogeneous elements—from assimilated families who, in America, would have been attracted by the temples of radicalism, to recent immigrants who betrayed the characteristics which, early in his career, he had denounced as fanaticism. He stook his stand on Jewish law, but in its interpretation was a *mekil* rather than a *mahmir*.<sup>31</sup> The preservation of unity was a paramount consideration, and if an innovation or a concession would preserve the unity of a congregation or gather the different sections of Anglo-Jewry under his religious leadership, then he did not rule it out.

His thunder was directed against the Left, because the danger of disintegration came much more from the forces of radicalism, now represented in England, than from those who were stricter than Hertz in

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31. He once wrote that according to Jewish law it was a greater offence to forbid what was permitted than to permit what was forbidden.

their interpretation of the *Shulhan Arukh*.<sup>32</sup> As to the Right, he drew their barbs because he would never tolerate a system of religious apartheid, but sought opportunities to cooperate with those from whom he differed religiously.<sup>33</sup>

His situation as Chief Rabbi, and his manner of coping with it, as well as his style of writing, make it worth while to set out in part the message which he sent to Hebrew Union College, the seed-bed of the radicalism he detested so heartily, on the occasion of its Jubilee:

Office of the Chief Rabbi  
21st October, 1925

The President, Hebrew Union College

Dear Dr. Morgenstern,

I cannot send you an unqualified endorsement of what the Hebrew Union College has taught or been during the fifty years of its existence. In our attitude to many beliefs and institutions that I deem to be essentials, we are, as you know, poles asunder. At best, you represent what my revered friend, the late Dr. Solomon Schechter, called "His Majesty's Opposition" in Israel's body spiritual.

And yet, times change . . . the men now reared in the Hebrew Union College are beginning to realize that . . . common action in defence against dangers from without and within—whether in local or in pan-Jewish problems—has become a vital necessity for the Jew of today and tomorrow. I gladly testify to the fact that only this year the Central Conference of Reform Rabbis—nearly all of them alumni of the Hebrew Union College—wholeheartedly co-operated with me in the defence of the Jewish Sabbath against certain calamitous proposals submitted to the League of Nations. It is my earnest hope that the Hebrew Union College may more and more become an agency for rebuilding the things in our religious life that former generations have thoughtlessly destroyed.

So far I have written as Chief Rabbi. It is, however, my inestimable privilege also to be the President of the oldest theological institution in the English-speaking world—Jews' College, London—founded seventy years ago by Dr. Nathan Marcus Adler and Sir Moses Montefiore. And as President of Jews' College, I congratulate the Hebrew Union College on its noble buildings; on its large and valuable library; on the ungrudging

32. A strong attack on Liberal (i.e., Reform) Judaism is contained in a series of three sermons entitled *The New Paths—Whither Do They Lead?* reprinted with a subsequent series, *Affirmations on Judaism* (London: Oxford University Press, 1927).

33. A key to his attitude appears in the course of denunciation of Liberal Judaism. "I have been asked why, in the circumstances, Orthodox Jewry does not officially recognize that men who proclaim such views have ruled themselves out of the ranks of Israel. Let history supply the answer. It is over a hundred and fifty years ago that the later followers of Sabbethai Zevi, under the leadership of the notorious Jacob Frank, attacked Jews and Judaism far more bitterly than ever did Liberals in Berlin, Chicago or London. Yet, the Chassidic legend relates, when Frank and his followers at last publicly left Judaism and joined the Catholic Church, the great Israel Baalshem wept the whole night and refused to be comforted. 'A man's arm may be paralyzed or sorely diseased,' he exclaimed, 'still there is always hope that it will regain its health and vigour. But if it is amputated, all hope of healing is gone for ever.' It is needless to point the moral or the application of this beautiful legend" (*Affirmations of Judaism*, p. 127). Words such as the foregoing would be superfluous in the light of conditions in the United States. They were deftly inserted in the sermon to answer the extremists in his own camp who questioned his right to maintain relations with those whom he was attacking.

and unquenchable financial support it has ever received; and last but not least, on the growing recognition that the crown of scholarship surpasses all other glories of a training college for the Jewish ministry.<sup>34</sup>

It deserves quotation because of the characteristic vigor of his English and for the forthrightness of his attitude. The absence of any "we-all-stand-for-the-same-thing" is positively refreshing. Equally noteworthy, though less obvious to American readers having regard to the acceptance of pluralism in American Jewish life, is the fact that Hertz did not fail to grasp the nettle. He could easily have ignored the invitation to send a message of greeting and, in fact, came under censure from his own right wing for not having done so.<sup>35</sup>

Two incidents, both arising in the tense summer of 1939 out of the same situation, illustrate Hertz's capacity for waging war on two fronts. The clouds of war were ominous, and a movement was under way to evacuate the Jewish children from Germany. Some of the assimilationist leaders of the organization concerned were placing children in Christian homes. Hertz's fury knew no bounds, and he assailed those responsible in unbridled terms. Then, convoys of children began to arrive on the Sabbath, which drew protests from Orthodox circles. Hertz dealt with the protesters briefly: "*Pikuah nefesh doheh et hashabbat* (the saving of life overrides the Sabbath law). If this fuss continues, I'll go and meet them myself."

Notwithstanding the claims on his time, Hertz's literary output was considerable. His *Book of Jewish Thoughts*, originally produced for Jewish soldiers in the First World War, enjoyed a certain vogue but, naturally, has been superseded by later anthologies. The two works which have kept his name before the present generation are his *Pentateuch and Haftorahs* and his annotated edition of the *Authorised Daily Prayer Book*. They show his capacity for digesting many-sided knowledge and expressing it in clear and forceful English, his eye for book production and his insight into the needs of the layman. While its popularity testifies to his grasp of a basic need, the *Pentateuch* in particular displays certain limitations in his approach. From the intellectual point of view, the polemics against the Higher Criticism give it a negative character, and this is not allayed when one discovers that some of those whose arguments he marshals against a particular point in the Graf-Welhausen hypothesis, themselves accepted the basic assumption that the Pentateuch is a composite document. Important issues as to the approach to be taken to Scripture are side-stepped, while the numerous quotations testifying to the moral excellence of the Bible give an apologetic air.

34. *Early and Late* (Hindhead: Soncino, 1943), p. 227.

35. Six years later when, under Hertz's presidency, Jews' College celebrated its seventy-fifth anniversary, a representative of Hebrew Union College brought a message of congratulations.



It is a work of feeling rather than of intellect, and it seems to spring from the horror felt by the traditionalist Jew at the radicalism of the *avant-garde* Bible critics who held the field in his youth and by a compelling need to disprove their denigration of the Hebrew Scriptures. In the lack of a positive position, one detects an ambivalence in Hertz's outlook. He had seen too much of the world to be a Fundamentalist; his moorings to the past were too strong to allow him to move to a modernist position.

Hertz died in January, 1946. During the last years of his life the War had disrupted the communal framework in which he had worked, and his loneliness was compounded by ever-present ill health. The institutions which he controlled remained intact, but the social and cultural ambience was shaken as far as England was concerned and shattered in its European neighbors. The style of Judaism inherent in the British Chief Rabbinate can be traced back, through Nathan Marcus Adler, to Isaac Noah Mannheimer in Vienna, when the hope of Emancipation beckoned the Jews of the West. Obviously, a new approach was needed when their descendants confronted the remains of the Holocaust. Perhaps it was symbolic that Hertz's final quarrel with Robert Waley Cohen arose out of the British government's retreat from its commitment to the Jewish National Home.

So quick has been the onrush of events that the record of the strivings of Hertz's generation has become stale without having acquired the aura of antiquity. Had he devoted himself to founding an organization, there would have been people with a vested interest in perpetuating his name. But he took over an existing institution which his successors have turned to such an extent that one wonders whether, today, one of his broad outlook could function within its rules. In his time, he raised its prestige and effectiveness and enabled it to survive a stressful period of Jewish history. That he was able to do this was due, in large measure, to his fighting spirit and catholicity of outlook. These qualities he imbibed in his early experience in New York, and they led to an unusually well rounded rabbinic career in which the community that fathered him can legitimately take pride.

# *Brandeis and deHaas: Two Conflicting Styles of Jewish Leadership*

A. JAMES RUDIN

JACOB deHAAS' (1872–1937) LIFELONG INVOLVEMENT in Zionism can be divided into three clearly defined periods. The first was his youthful commitment to Theodor Herzl, whom he served as a personal secretary during the First Zionist Congress in 1897. The second covered deHaas' middle years, and consisted of his loyal service to Louis D. Brandeis in America. Finally, in his last years, embittered by intra-Zionist bickering and divisiveness, deHaas gave his not inconsiderate skills as a political organizer and polemicist to the cause of Vladimir Jabotinsky. Being a faithful and dedicated follower of three of Zionism's giants is reason enough to make Jacob deHaas' life and career worth studying. But it was the Brandeis period that was the longest in duration and that had the most decisive impact upon deHaas personally and upon the Zionist movement in general.

In 1910, deHaas interested Brandeis in the cause of Zionism, becoming, in fact, the future Supreme Court Justice's principal mentor on all Jewish concerns. But the deHaas-Brandeis relationship was a problematic one for the two men, for each one's style and approach to Jewish life and problems represents a different classic type of Jewish communal leadership. The critical events of 1917 vividly illustrate this.

In that year Brandeis was the President of the Federation of American Zionists and the Chairman of the Provisional Executive Committee. Because of the War, the entire world Zionist organization was in disarray. As early as 1914, Chaim Weizmann had written to Brandeis from England that "... the American Provisional Committee should be given full power to deal with all Zionist matters, until better times come."<sup>1</sup> During this period, deHaas served as the Committee's Executive Secretary, but he was actually Brandeis' "Secretary of State." deHaas commuted between his home in Boston, where he was the editor of the *Jewish Advocate*, and New York, where the American Zionist movement maintained its headquarters. Brandeis, as a newly confirmed Justice, an appointment of his good friend, President Woodrow Wilson, resided in Washington.

From the outbreak of the War in 1914, Weizmann and his associates

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1. Leonard Stein, *The Balfour Declaration* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1961), p. 99.

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in England had worked with great care and skill to achieve a British War Cabinet public statement supporting the principle of a Jewish National Home in Palestine. When the United States entered the War on the side of the Allies in April, 1917, the American Zionist effort became vital for the success of Weizmann's plan. If President Wilson could be persuaded to give public support to the Zionist program, then Herzl's "dream" of twenty years earlier would be well on the way toward becoming a reality. With this in mind, Weizmann cabled Brandeis several times in April and May of 1917, emphasizing the same basic message: obtain the President's public endorsement of the proposed British statement on Zionism.<sup>2</sup>

The American Zionist leadership was thus forced, for the first time, to become active in the international arena. The organization could no longer remain simply a "shekel" collecting or an educational agency whose greatest adversary until then had been some anti-Zionist Reform rabbis. Brandeis, deHaas, Stephen S. Wise, and the other Zionist leaders became centrally involved in crucial decisions that affected millions of people. Like the United States, itself, they were relatively unprepared for such awesome and far-reaching tasks. It is little wonder that deHaas called the eight months between April and November of 1917 the most "stirring days" of his life.<sup>3</sup>

During those days Brandeis and deHaas had almost daily correspondence, much of it dealing with Weizmann's continual pleas for action. It was, however, a peculiar correspondence. The Justice dispatched brief cryptic notes to deHaas written in his unclear script. The salutation was a constant: "deH." deHaas, however, responded to Brandeis with neat, well composed typed letters, always being sure to start each note with: "Dear Mr. Brandeis." Privately, and when writing to other Zionist leaders, deHaas referred to Brandeis as the "Chief." deHaas' letters clearly reflect this attitude of deference, for Brandeis'

. . . carefully phrased letters, with their numbered paragraphs, followed at short intervals by demands for precise detailed statements, were not only a serious strain upon those to whom letter writing was an event, but the whole procedure called for an orderliness and a systematization, a compactness and a precision which often irked volunteers as well as the paid staff of the organization.<sup>4</sup>

Herbert Parzen, who has elsewhere discussed the role of Brandeis

2. deHaas Archives in the Zionist Library and Archives in New York City. I am especially grateful to Mrs. Sylvia Landress for her gracious help and cooperation. The Weizmann cables are dated April 8, 25, and 30, and May 28, all in 1917. (Stein, *Op. cit.*, pp. 424-425).

3. *The New Palestine*, (October 28, 1927): 321, 343.

4. Jacob deHaas, *Louis Dembitz Brandeis* (New York: Bloch Publishing Company, 1929), pp. 51-55.

in the development of the Balfour Declaration,<sup>5</sup> is highly critical of Brandeis' inaction and lassitude in pursuing Zionist aims during the very days when the text of the Declaration was being formulated. As Leonard Stein clearly documents,<sup>6</sup> President Wilson did, in fact, transmit his private approval of the Declaration to the British Government, but Wilson's action was taken with almost no prodding or pressure from Brandeis and, as a result, an important opportunity to strengthen the text was lost. It was the Justice's "chief weakness" as a Zionist.<sup>7</sup>

If Brandeis was less than forthright in pressing for the British Zionist proposals, it was not deHaas' fault. There were at least five separate instances when he advised Brandeis to become more active in the struggle surrounding that single most important Jewish issue of the period: the Balfour Declaration. But, in each case, deHaas was clearly rebuffed by Brandeis and, as will be indicated below, a discernible pattern emerges from a close analysis of the source material. deHaas sought greater communication with the British Zionists, he wanted a multistrategy approach with the other national governments that were involved, he offered some significant changes to the original Declaration text, and he desired the mass mobilization of the American Jewish community in support of the Balfour Declaration. Brandeis rejected every one of these proposals. They may have been "stirring days" for deHaas, but they certainly had to be days of deep disappointment and frustration for him as well.

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Less than a week after America entered the War, Stephen Wise met with Colonel E. H. House, the President's chief adviser on foreign affairs, and the two men discussed Zionist aims and goals in the post-war period. House's anti-Semitism has been noted by Selig Adler,<sup>8</sup> and Wise's pattern of overestimating the importance of his White House contacts is widely known. Nonetheless, in April, 1917, House took a positive position towards Zionism, and the post-war future of Palestine. He told Wise:

Six months ago I would have said that a British-American protectorate over Palestine and Syria would be impossible. Nothing is impossible any longer. Everything has broken down, and we can build up again almost as we choose.

In his report to deHaas, Wise remarked, "... we must trust him (House) in the matter, and we do. He is enlisted in our cause. There is no ques-

5. *Herzl Yearbook* (New York: The Herzl Press, 1963), Vol. 6, pp. 309-350. Parzen's article, "Brandeis and the Balfour Declaration," is a highly critical view of Brandeis' leadership in 1917.

6. Stein, *Op. cit.*, pp. 529-532.

7. Parzen, *Op. cit.*, p. 325.

8. Selig Adler, "The Palestine Question in the Wilson Era." *Jewish Social Studies*, (September, 1948): 306.

tion about it, whatever.”<sup>9</sup> deHaas and the other American Zionist leaders were pleased, naturally, that House supported their cause, but Weizmann quickly and firmly discouraged any discussion of a joint Anglo-American Palestine protectorate: “. . . a British protectorate . . . is the only guarantee for a future healthy Jewish development in Palestine.”<sup>10</sup>

In late April, Weizmann learned of possible French territorial ambitions in post-war Palestine, and when, in the same month, Italy entered the war against Turkey, the entire future of a British protectorate was placed in severe doubt. The specter of tri-partite control of Palestine or, worse yet, an “internationalized” Palestine haunted Weizmann and his associates. It was about this time that a high level French diplomatic delegation visited Washington to confer on common war aims and policies with its new American ally. deHaas, always an activist, at once sensed an opportunity to advance the Zionist cause. He suggested that Brandeis and/or Wise should meet with M. René Viviani, the French delegation’s leader.<sup>11</sup> It was a significant and timely proposal, since the provisions of the once secret Sykes-Picot treaty were by then known to Zionist leadership. Furthermore, such a meeting would heighten French awareness of the Weizmann plan. Nahum Sokolow was, at the same time, in Paris attempting to obtain France’s support for the plan. It was quite probable that the French, already exhausted by nearly three years of a ghastly war, would have taken most seriously a visit of high level American Zionist leaders. Indeed, anything “American” was welcomed by the weary French in 1917, and the impact of an American Supreme Court Justice advocating the Weizmann Palestine plan would have been most positive. All of this deHaas probably sensed, but Brandeis vetoed the plan with a curt telegram to his Zionist “Secretary of State”: “I greatly doubt advisability of . . . seeing Frenchmen.”<sup>12</sup> Still, deHaas’ idea had too much merit to be rejected completely, and Brandeis asked Eugene Meyer, a new convert to Zionism and a minor United States Government official, “to learn what he can about French post war interests in Palestine.” It was to be a fruitless inquiry, and Meyer informed Brandeis that he “knows nothing of value now.”<sup>13</sup> Brandeis was perhaps more comfortable in using the services of a relatively assimilated Jew like Meyer on such a mission, rather than pressing for an official meeting with the French delegation. One may understand Brandeis’ affinity for Jews who were like himself in background, but deHaas’ plan deserved a more affirmative response than it gained from the Justice.

But there was a deeper reason for Brandeis’ rebuff of deHaas’ sug-

9. deHaas Archives, April 7, 1917.

10. Stein, *Op. cit.*, p. 426.

11. deHaas Archives, May 10, 1917.

12. *Ibid.*, May 11, 1917.

13. *Ibid.*

gestion to meet with the French. That proposal was made on May 10, but four days earlier Brandeis had had a personal meeting with President Wilson. The session lasted forty-five minutes, and it covered "general Zionist policy." (The report of this crucial meeting was prepared by deHaas from Brandeis' notes.<sup>14</sup>) Wilson accepted the basic aims of the Zionist plan for Jewish settlement in Palestine, and he expressed favor for the Weizmann proposals. The Justice welcomed the President's positive response, especially the prospect of his drafting Wilson's public statement of support. Brandeis believed that the President would "exercise his influence" on the French regarding Palestine; hence, there was no need for American Zionists to pursue the matter directly with Viviani. However, nothing indicates that Wilson did, in fact, use his vast influence with the French in this matter. Because of this trust in Wilson, Brandeis did almost nothing save for the tepid Meyer mission of inquiry, and events moved forward without the Justice shaping them in any positive way.<sup>15</sup>

Obviously, the English Zionist leaders needed to know the results of the Brandeis meeting with the President. To that end, deHaas prepared a cable for Lord James Rothschild, the head of the British Zionist Organization, containing a full description of the Wilson-Brandeis conversation.<sup>16</sup> Perhaps because of his own British background, or perhaps because of his international experience with Herzl, deHaas wanted his European colleagues to be fully informed. However, he had not reckoned with Brandeis' penchant for secrecy nor with the Justice's deeply felt sense of American isolationism. deHaas saw himself as part of a great international Jewish renaissance movement, while Brandeis' Zionist commitment was, in a profound way, rooted to America and Americanism:

Every Irish-American who contributed to advancing home rule was a better man and a better American for the sacrifice involved. Every American Jew who aids in advancing the Jewish settlement of Palestine, though he feels sure that neither he nor his descendants will ever wish to go there, will likewise be a better man, and a better American for doing so.<sup>17</sup>

The deHaas cable to Rothschild, prepared for Brandeis' signature, was never sent. But the Justice did communicate with the English Zionist leader, and he wrote to deHaas: "... I cabled Rothschild and suppose nothing more in cable is needed."<sup>18</sup> Brandeis' message to Rothschild was drafted not by deHaas, but by a young Harvard Law Professor who, like Brandeis and Meyer, was also a newcomer to Zionism: Felix Frankfurter. It was a laconic cable: "Have had satisfactory talk with Mr. Bal-

14. *Ibid.*, May 9, 1917.

15. Stein, *Op. cit.*, pp. 426-427.

16. deHaas Archives, May 15, 1917.

17. deHaas, *Louis Dembitz Brandeis*, p. 169.

18. deHaas Archives, May 16, 1917.



four (Brandeis had met the British Minister twice in Washington in early May) also with our President. This is not for publication.”<sup>19</sup>

deHaas must have been disappointed by Brandeis’ action, and a few days later he wrote to his “Chief”: “There is no essential difference between Felix’ and my own draft of the cable, except that I added some more facts that I thought were desirable to be known on the other side.”<sup>20</sup> The relationship between deHaas and Frankfurter was a tense and delicate one. In 1934, Balfour’s biographer, Mrs. Dugdale, sought information from Frankfurter concerning the Balfour-Brandeis meetings of May, 1917. Frankfurter had not been present at the talks, but he wrote a memorandum from memory indicating that Balfour and Brandeis had taken an instant liking to one another, sharing a common view on the entire subject of Zionism. The deHaas Archives, which were not available in 1934, substantially corroborate Frankfurter’s memorandum that begins:

Memory has had to be relied on, but the memory is that of Brandeis’ Zionist secretary at the time, as well as the memories of two or three of us who were in the Justice’s confidence . . .

Felix Frankfurter was either unable or unwilling even to mention deHaas by name, and he clearly excluded him from those “who were in the Justice’s confidence.”<sup>21</sup> As early as 1920 Frankfurter had written: “It’s sheer nonsense for a man of his (deHaas’) brains to make the enemies he does.”<sup>22</sup>

“Brandeis’ Zionist secretary” continued to press for a full exchange of information with the Zionists “on the other side.” On May 24, he prepared yet another communication for Lord Rothschild, which he wanted to share with Weizmann and Sokolow. It was a long cable and it contained a rather complete and optimistic picture of American Zionism. More importantly, it outlined in some detail a description of Brandeis’ talks with the President and with Balfour.<sup>23</sup> But Brandeis refused to sign it, and it, too, was never sent. No reason was ever given to deHaas for this rebuff, but one can speculate. Plainly, Brandeis did not want the English Zionists to learn any real details of his May 6 meeting with Wilson. Instead, he gave them only a brief glimmer. He was probably more concerned about this privileged communication than about deHaas’ hopeful view of American receptivity to the Weizmann plan. Once again, Brandeis had rejected a significant deHaas proposal: the sharing of vital information with overseas colleagues.

19. Stein, *Op. cit.*, p. 427.

20. deHaas Archives, May 16, 1917.

21. Stein, *Op. cit.*, pp. 427-428.

22. Alpheus Thomas Mason, *Brandeis, A Free Man’s Life* (New York: The Viking Press, 1946), p. 463.

23. deHaas Archives, May 24, 1917.

At the same time that Brandeis had scuttled deHaas' proposed cables, the British Zionists sent the first draft of the Weizmann plan to their American counterparts.<sup>24</sup> The Justice transmitted this document to the State Department with a cryptic Brandeisian message attached: "I think you will be interested in enclosed formulation of the Zionist program by Weizmann and his associates and which we approve."<sup>25</sup> This note of lukewarm commitment was the only communication that the American Zionist leadership, that is, Brandeis, had with the State Department in 1917. By any standard, it was much too weak for such an important international endeavor as Zionism.

deHaas, already rebuffed three times by Brandeis in May, 1917, alone, quickly set to work analyzing the British draft, and his response was completed sometime during the last week of that month. He was in essential agreement with his British colleagues, but there were three critical differences. He added the phrase "without prejudice to the civic and religious rights of the existing non-Jewish communities." deHaas also called for "the establishment of a homeland in Palestine for the Jewish people," a crucial change from the original draft that saw "Palestine as the Jewish National Home." Finally, he added the "foregoing plan must not affect the civil and political status of the Jews in any other country."<sup>26</sup> The final text of the Balfour Declaration contained similar language, but Stein and Parzen agree that the deHaas amendments had almost no influence upon the shaping of the final draft.<sup>27</sup> Moreover, it appears that the deHaas suggestions were probably never even sent to Britain. The bitter anti-Zionist campaign that was mounted by some English Jews, including Claude Montefiore and Edwin Montagu, was responsible for the crucial textual modifications. Years later, deHaas took credit for decisively shaping the Balfour Declaration text,<sup>28</sup> but the facts simply do not support such a claim. The sources indicate that Weizmann and his colleagues made no mention of ever receiving the deHaas amendments. Given the political structure of American Zionism of 1917, it is probable that Brandeis himself blocked deHaas from communicating directly with their British associates.

The struggle to obtain the War Cabinet's public support for the Weizman plan reached its climax in the autumn of 1917, and the British Zionists kept Brandeis, deHaas, and the other American leaders well

24. *Ibid.*, May 21, 1917.

. . . Summary: Palestine is to be recognized as the Jewish National Home. Jews of all countries to be accorded full liberty of immigration. Jews to enjoy full national, political and civic rights accorded to their place of residence in Palestine. A charter is to be granted to a Jewish Company for the development of Palestine. The Hebrew language to be recognized as the official language of the Jewish Province.

25. Adler, *Op. cit.*, p. 305.

26. deHaas Archives, May 21(?), 1917.

27. Stein, *Op. cit.*, pp. 530-532; Parzen, *Op. cit.*, p. 339.

28. *The New Palestine*, (October 28, 1927): 321, 343.

informed of every new twist in the delicate negotiations. In late September, Brandeis met with House to discuss Wilson's position regarding the proposed text. It was a good meeting, and Brandeis cabled Weizmann:

(Wilson) in entire sympathy with declaration quoted . . . as approved by Foreign Minister and Prime Minister. I, of course, heartily agree.<sup>29</sup>

In early October, the anti-Zionist drive, led by Montagu, a member of the Cabinet, and by the pro-Arab forces within the British military, reached its peak. Weizmann urgently cabled the American Zionists for assistance and public support.<sup>30</sup> deHaas "went into immediate session" with Wise and other leaders to plan a course of action. deHaas wanted "thousands of resolutions by organized Jewish groups" to support the proposed statement. He was "reasonably certain" that he could obtain the signatures of many prominent non-Zionists, and he was "prepared to put the machinery in motion to accomplish this," including "a monster petition plan." In addition, he wanted an emergency meeting of the Zionist Political Committee.<sup>31</sup> deHaas also reiterated the same textual changes he had suggested in May.

Brandeis' brief and chilling response is most telling:

My disposition would be not to attempt to change the phraseology. Weizmann is probably doing the best he can, and the difference does not seem to me to be very important. . . . Fix your Provisional Committee without reference to me. . . . I must so far as possible refrain from Zionist interruptions which have been serious since Court began.<sup>32</sup>

Wise and deHaas met with House in mid-October, at which time the Zionist Executive Secretary presented his three, key, textual changes to the Presidential adviser. House ". . . said he would endeavor to have the message sent (to the War Cabinet in London) suggesting the change," but he never transmitted deHaas' amendments. However, the meeting was "satisfactory" because House indicated that the President had decided to give his private approval to the declaration, but that he would not make any statements of public support until "later as events developed," and ten months later President Wilson did send a public Rosh Hashanah greeting to Rabbi Wise endorsing the Balfour Declaration. House concluded the meeting by advising deHaas and Wise that there was "no occasion for Brandeis to see the President."<sup>33</sup>

It had been nearly six months since Brandeis had met with Wilson, and during that time the President had transmitted his private support of the declaration to London. However, no real pressure was placed upon

29. Stein, *Op. cit.*, pp. 506-507.

30. deHaas Archives, October 7, 1917.

31. *Ibid.*, October 15, 1917.

32. *Ibid.*, October 19, 1917.

33. *Ibid.*, October 16, 1917.

Wilson to strengthen the document, nor was there any mass mobilization of the American Jewish community in behalf of the Weizmann plan. Nor did the Political Action Committee of the Provisional Zionist Committee meet to plan any overall strategy. No wonder that Stephen Wise wrote to Brandeis:

I cannot help feeling that it would have been better if the Colonel (House) or Cyrus (Wilson) had consulted you prior to assenting to the declaration submitted.<sup>34</sup>

In 1929, deHaas published a laudatory biography of Brandeis. Yet, he devoted only a single paragraph to the various revisions of the Balfour Declaration. The last two sentences of that paragraph are a study in vagueness concealing any real emotion or any accurate details of what actually happened in 1917. Nor does deHaas indicate the frustration and disappointment that he must have experienced:

The draft cabled from government to government was handed to the Brandeis regime for its approval. After a most necessary revision, President Wilson, acting through Colonel House who was in full sympathy with the Zionist aims, authorized cabling to the British government the version that was published, and to which all the allied governments in turn gave their approval.<sup>35</sup>

Brandeis rejected deHaas on five separate occasions in 1917, and each rebuff represented a significant difference in style and thinking between the two men. In a larger sense, these differences are paradigmatic of the two classic types of Jewish leadership. deHaas was the activist who wanted to bring pressure upon the French government, to share vital information with overseas colleagues, and, most of all, he wanted to mobilize the Jewish community for direct public action. deHaas' type of leadership is very much evident today; indeed, it might be termed the standard approach to solving Jewish problems. Brandeis, however, was at worst secretive and at best laconic with his associates. He passed up real opportunities to influence foreign governments vis-à-vis Zionism, and he actively discouraged public campaigns of Jewish support in behalf of the Balfour Declaration. His policy was quite simply: trust me, and, by implication, trust the President. The Brandeisian approach is also very much with us today, as some Jewish leaders attempt to practice *hochpolitik* in secret.

The central problem, however, remains: What is the most effective Jewish strategy to use on current "Cyruses" in order to achieve maximum results? In studying the strained deHaas-Brandeis relationship of 1917, one must always remember that neither possessed the lessons of the Holocaust and of the current struggle to save Soviet Jewry and to maintain the security of the State of Israel. These lessons indicate that

34. Stein, *Op. cit.*, p. 530.

35. deHaas, *Louis Dembitz Brandeis*, p. 92.

both strategies are needed and that there may be a valid place for what is today called "quiet diplomacy," but, in general, Jewish aims and goals are best achieved by an informed and publicly active Jewish community.

Given the magnitude of the problem and the inexperience of the American Zionist leadership in 1917, Brandeis did achieve a great deal. But it is hard to escape the conclusion that his personal and highly private style significantly weakened the Balfour Declaration and the American government's official response to it. An aroused and informed American Jewish community might have overcome the pro-Arab groups that were at work in Washington and in London by demanding a less ambiguous text that would have been much more forthright in supporting the Zionist program.

More, much more, could have been done on this side of the Atlantic in 1917, but perhaps since Brandeis was new to Zionism and things Jewish he may not have been familiar with the Biblical verse: "For Zion's sake I will not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest." Most likely, deHaas did know Isaiah's words, and he attempted to act upon them.

# *Judaism Despite Christianity*

RIVKA HORWITZ

FRANZ ROSENZWEIG'S RETURN TO JUDAISM IS THE story of the struggle of an individual disillusioned by the void into which he had been cast as a rootless Jew in enlightened Germany. In fact, however, his act of return served, although unwittingly, to restore to Jewishness a certain "respectability" that it had lost in the circles of assimilated German Jewish intellectuals.<sup>1</sup>

Rosenzweig's particular problem began effectively as a struggle between the abstractions of Hegelianism and the historical faith of Christianity. Could he have been satisfied with an abstract philosophical approach to life, or with liberalism, he might have remained a Hegelian or an idealist and lived as an assimilated Jew. He sought far more. Yet it did not initially occur to him to invest his Jewishness with the ultimate meaning that it was to hold for him in later years.

Strangely, it was a converted Jew, wishing to "help" his colleague overcome the last obstacles to baptism, who, in the end, unconsciously provided the most decisive single influence behind Rosenzweig's return to Judaism. The influence of Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy (1888–1973) has previously been greatly underestimated, both as regards Rosenzweig's return, and in the development of his dialogical thinking and his particular understanding of Judaism and Christianity.

## *Eugen Rosenstock*

Rosenstock and Rosenzweig first met on January 10, 1910, at a convention in Baden-Baden, where Rosenzweig made a youthful attempt to define a philosophy for the twentieth century. He and his cousins, Hans and Rudolf Ehrenberg—both eventually professors in Germany, the one in philosophy and the other in physiology—had prepared a declaration to present to the prominent historians from Southwestern Germany at a convention to investigate contemporary culture through historical examination and analysis. Rosenzweig, then only twenty-three, appeared with a number of his fellow students before the dignified pro-

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1. The account of this return has been complicated by the tendency for fact and legend to merge. The present article is based on an examination of Rosenzweig manuscripts found in the Leo Baeck Institute in New York, and on interviews with two of Rosenzweig's closest acquaintances during the crucial years before the First World War—the late Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy and Joseph Prager, as well as on the existing printed material.

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fessors and told them what the twentieth century could salvage from the nineteenth and what it should reject.<sup>2</sup>

Rosenstock told me some of his reactions to the students' performance: "How did they dare to come up with that platform? How could they hope to achieve anything? What did they expect? Did they think that those old professors would change their opinion?" Their platform—an attempt of students who wished to revolutionize the established world—was, indeed, ill-received and the effort ended in a shameful failure. It indicates, however, Rosenzweig's efforts to find an independent point of view, a philosophy dealing with present problems in a new light. A few months after the convention he wrote:

Without Baden-Baden I would have always remained a naive idealist. Our mistake was to seek unity with those with whom we cannot unite. This awareness grew in me on account of Baden-Baden and only for you [Hans] was it a disappointment. For me it was the crucial experiment—to speak in scientific language.<sup>3</sup>

When Rosenstock and Rosenzweig met in 1910, five years had passed since the former's baptism. Eugen Rosenstock had been born in Berlin, the son of an assimilated family that much resembled the Rosenzweigs. The families had known each other since Eugen's grandfather, Moritz Rosenstock, succeeded Samuel Meir Ehrenberg, Franz' great-grandfather, as principal of the Jewish school in Wolfenbüttel.<sup>4</sup> In the years in which Samuel Meir Ehrenberg, a man of learning and Zunz' teacher, was principal, the "light of knowledge shone" and the study of Talmud was reduced. When Ehrenberg retired and Rosenstock became principal, the Jewish character of the school under his direction continued to weaken; Jewish studies were confined to three hours a week of Jewish religion and three hours of Hebrew.

Eugen's mother, Paula, was born in Wolfenbüttel. She married her cousin, Theodore Rosenstock, and they later settled in Berlin. Though Eugen entered Christianity gradually, he did so willingly. Dr. Hans Storck has quoted to me Rosenstock's own testimony on this matter: he was under the influence of an uncle, his mother's brother, who had become a Protestant. Together with the mother, the uncle encouraged Eugen to accept Christianity. First joining a church choir, with which he was delighted, the boy then took lessons with a minister. When Eugen was baptized at the age of seventeen, it appeared to him as if it were a belated act that should have been carried out long before.

2. Franz Rosenzweig, *Briefe* (Berlin: Schocken, 1935), pp. 47 ff.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 59.

4. As communicated by Rosenstock-Huessy. See M. Eliav, *Ha-hinukh ha-yehudi be-germania* (Jewish Education in Germany, 102–107. Zunz also wrote a biography of S. M. Ehrenberg. Glatzer published the correspondence between them, *Leopold and Adelheid Zunz* (London, 1958), and *Leopold Zunz: Jude-Deutscher-Europaer* (Tübingen, 1964).

To justify his baptism, Rosenstock later wrote that Judaism is a dead religion and that Christianity is the religion of the future.<sup>5</sup> His baptism was an attempt to find a solution to his religious problem, to leave the emptiness in which he had been raised. Judaism was not even an alternative for him at the time of his conversion, as he later related to Heschel; it was only after his conversion that he began to see the alternative, but then it was too late for him.

Rosenzweig belonged, as a student, to a group of intellectuals who sought theology rather than philosophy, and this, of course, brought them close to Christianity. Rosenstock was one of that group. Under the influence of Nietzsche and Kierkegaard, they sought a solution by a return to the Bible. They opposed the distinction between body and soul, stressing man's existence here and now, life and man's decision. For them, philosophy had ceased to be an academic matter and became a view that has to be realized in life. Rosenzweig's cousins, Hans and Rudolf Ehrenberg, who also belonged to that circle, therefore accepted Christianity. By 1910, Rosenzweig had already expressed the thought that personal religion rather than abstract philosophy is the way that can redeem man; but that thought must be taken in a vague sense, since he was speaking as a Jew and it is hard to see through which religion he wanted to save the world. In a letter to Hans Ehrenberg he wrote:

Hegel's religious intellectualism is no longer ours. We emphasize today action, the Fall history. Therefore, we refuse to see "God in history" because we do not want to look at history as at a picture or a being. We recognize God in every ethical act, but not in the accomplished whole, in history. Why would we need God if history were divine. . . . For Hegel history was a divine theodicy. For us religion is the only true theodicy.<sup>6</sup>

Rosenzweig, the Jew, suggested to his Christian cousin that they must redeem the world through religion, through a faith that he himself had not yet even defined.

When, in 1909, Hans converted at the age of 25, Rosenzweig wrote to his parents:

I really see nothing shameful in the whole matter. It's an excellent thing, after all, to be able to make contact with religion, even somewhat late—if only for the sake of one's children—when one has been robbed of it by early neglect. Of course it would have been best if Uncle and Aunt had had their children baptized or circumcised at birth, but it is better to repair the omission belatedly than not at all. . . . Can being non-religious on principle satisfy religious needs?<sup>7</sup>

5. Eugen Rosenstock-Huussy, *Judaism Despite Christianity: The "Letters on Christianity and Judaism" between Eugen Rosenstock-Huussy and Franz Rosenzweig* (University: Alabama University Press, 1969), p. 125.

6. *Briefe*, p. 55.

7. *Briefe*, pp. 45 ff. Also, N. N. Glatzer, *Franz Rosenzweig: His Life and Thought* (New York: Schocken, 1961), pp. 18–19.

A few days later he added:

Three visits to a Jewish theologian won't hold water. We are Christians in everything. We live in a Christian State, attend Christian schools, read Christian books—in short, our whole "culture" rests entirely on a Christian foundation; consequently, a man who has nothing holding him back needs only a very slight push—the "three visits"—to make him accept Christianity. In Germany today, the Jewish religion cannot be "accepted." . . . It would be entirely out of the question for Hans to become a Jew; a Christian, however, he can become.<sup>8</sup>

There is no doubt that Rosenzweig strongly counseled Hans to convert, and justified his act. His counsel was simultaneously an attack on the generation of his parents and uncles who had brought them up in a vacuum: Hans has no roots, no heritage, no learning; let him be a Christian; then, at least, he has a concrete religion. It may be shameful and problematic for him, but his children and grandchildren will have a faith. We might ask whether Rosenzweig compared his upbringing with that of Hans. Hans was not circumcised and, having no idea of a vital Judaism, he had no choice. Years later, when he had already decided to remain a Jew, Rosenzweig wrote to Hans, "Don't you know that I always felt as a positive Jew in comparison to you and Rudi, or at least as one who has a positive feeling to his heritage?"<sup>9</sup> Rosenzweig wrote this in 1919, but it is clear that in 1911–1912 he himself considered conversion.

#### *Rosenzweig's Family Background and Jewish Education*

Although his parents did not consider Judaism particularly important, Franz had received a richer Jewish education than did his cousins. He had been circumcised, had a kind of Bar Mitzvah, learned some Hebrew in his youth, and joined his parents in their visits to the synagogue on the High Holidays. Like most Jews in his time, he attended public school, but felt that socially he was in a pure Jewish environment; his friends were, like himself, the children of Jewish parents. He felt that a spark of Jewish vitality remained only in the synagogue and that he who visits there takes some of it with him. Rosenzweig never mocked the Yom Kippur Jews, feeling that even those rare visits to a synagogue could have an enormous impact.

Of special importance in his youth was the influence of "Uncle Adam," who lived nearby. Adam, a traditional Jew who attended the synagogue regularly, took a special interest in Franz and spent many hours with him. From this uncle, Franz received considerable Jewish influence, as he himself later admitted to Joseph Prager.

Franz' father, Georg Rosenzweig (1857–1918), was one of the im-

8. Ibid.

9. *Briefe*, p. 373.

portant administrators in the Jewish community of Cassel. Coming from the business world, Georg may have had difficulties understanding his only son's sensitivity. The greatest favor that the father did for his son was to help him establish the Jewish Academy for the Science of Judaism in Berlin; in February, 1918, he went with Franz to visit Hermann Cohen in order to help set up the economic foundation for the Academy. "Then," Franz wrote, "for the first time I was thankful to him; I wanted to embrace him, but I was ashamed."<sup>10</sup>

Franz's mother, Adele Alsberg-Rosenzweig (1867–1933), was the daughter of simple village Jews who had moved to Cassel in 1872. In her interesting memoirs,<sup>11</sup> she relates her early recollections of Cassel and of the little Jewish education which she had received. Her formal education lasted no more than eight or nine years, yet she read and studied literature and philosophy and was interested in current events.

In order to see the ambivalent relation to Jewish life in the home of Rosenzweig's parents, it is worth relating their way of celebrating Christmas. Since Franz, their only son, was born on December 25, and since the parents, like many assimilated Jews, both wanted to observe the holiday and, yet, to avoid it, they celebrated "Franz' birthday." The confusion between Franz and Jesus roused angry reactions in their son and indicates the type of problems that existed in their home.<sup>12</sup>

Like most Jews in Germany at that time, his parents wished to become part of German society. Yet they were still, to some extent, proud Jews and did not agree with the conversion of their nephew, Hans Ehrenberg. While they thought that a few conversations with a theologian might solve his problem, they were not prepared to live Judaism in such a way that might satisfy Hans' craving for a real religion. It was enough that a theologian should clarify matters for him in order that he might become a liberal Jew like them. Hans' deep search for a significant religion was beyond them.

In 1902–1903, when Franz was sixteen, he participated in the Jewish religious instruction given to Gymnasium students during the hours in which Christians learned their religion. Joseph Prager, the son of a rabbi in Cassel and a friend of Franz, shared in those lessons. He describes them in his memoirs of Rosenzweig.<sup>13</sup> He thought that the lessons fitted the general system, not teaching them enough Judaism to live by, but too much if the assumption was that Judaism must die. Prager has told me that the teacher was Felix Lazarus, the principal of

10. *Briefe*, p. 297.

11. In the Rosenzweig Archive of the Leo Baeck Institute in New York one finds her eloquent, unpublished autobiography. She also wrote about Franz's early years, but with less success.

12. As communicated by Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy.

13. J. Prager, "*Begegnungen auf dem Wege*," in *Ein Buch des Gedenkens* (Berlin, 1930), p. 40.

the Jewish Teachers' Seminary in Cassel. According to Prager, Lazarus was a nonentity, lacking any power to influence and speaking in a peculiar way. Nevertheless, the lessons may have had some effect. They studied Hosea, Jonah, Micah and the Sayings of the Fathers, in German, as they did not know Hebrew. (Prager, now in his eighties, still remembers these chapters by heart.) It is possible that Franz, who was a brilliant student, took more from these classes than the average student. Fifteen years later, when Rosenzweig wrote his "It's Time," a bitter criticism of the Jewish education system in Germany, he based his article on those very lessons which, in 1917, he had wished to see improved.

Franz did not completely cease studying Hebrew, even when, as a university student, he turned to other areas.<sup>14</sup> In 1906, when he was learning medicine, he related, in one of his letters, that in the Spring vacation he had again started learning Hebrew. We might ask if this was due to the influence of Uncle Adam whom Franz met during his vacation. In that same year, he wrote notes in his diary defining the bases of his Judaism: 1) it is the religion of his forefathers; 2) he enjoys certain customs—the ceremonial laws are, in a way, a dogma; 3) he has a faith in Plato; and, finally, 4) he thinks in Biblical symbols. Regarding these principles, he states that the first is the central and strongest, the second is weaker and supports the first, and the latter two are merely ornaments.<sup>15</sup> At the same time he wrote: "I have worshipped God in a variety of forms: childish, Hebrew, Biblical, Homeric, natural, pantheistic, Platonic, Christian and atheistic."<sup>16</sup> In those years he was primarily occupied with German idealism and German classics, working with Hegel's political theory, particularly on the young Hegel.

In 1911, Rosenzweig still attended lectures of Jewish interest, such as the one given by the well-known liberal rabbi, Emil Cohn, on the subject of the religious problem of modern Jewry.<sup>17</sup> (He was impressed by the lecture, though he could not accept Cohn's positive attitude toward Zionism.) But, for the most part, his interest in Judaism and Jewry had by this time become quite fragmentary and peripheral. In the center stood Hans' and Rudolf's baptism and he asked himself when his turn would come. He was aware that no Jewish theologian could save the situation. Theology was too vague, for Judaism, if accepted at all, "has to be grafted on by circumcision, dietary laws and Bar Mitzvah." But Christianity had tremendous advantages, because society was Christian and, within it, one has no more conflicts. In those years, Rosenzweig thoroughly studied the New Testament and Christian theology, preparing himself for the road. His parents saw and understood that it

14. *Briefe*, p. 25. See also, pp. 31, 38 and 42, in relation to his Jewish interests.

15. Glatzer, *Franz Rosenzweig*, p. 9.

16. *Ibid.*, p. 12.

17. *Briefe*, p. 60.

was merely a matter of time before he would finally convert. In actuality, his preparation took longer than it should have. By 1912 he already had his doctorate and was still a Jew. If he would have converted as a student like the others, a university position might have been offered to him, but now time was running out. The problem became more urgent and, not finding any better solution, he adhered to liberal theories, while at the same time becoming increasingly critical of them.

### *The Debates at Leipzig*

In January, 1912, Rosenzweig moved to Leipzig in order to meet regularly with Rosenstock to discuss the Christian faith—to receive the final conviction for his act. Although two years younger than Rosenzweig, Rosenstock was already a teacher of medieval constitutional law. To Rosenzweig, Rosenstock appeared to be a true philosopher, which, indeed, he was. Rudolf and Hans Ehrenberg had not been able to help Rosenzweig, as their Christian position lacked the religious depth of Rosenstock. Only he could shake Rosenzweig out of his superficial position and drive him to experience a depth that he had never before realized. Indeed, there are those who speak of Rosenstock as the most powerful religious figure living in our century.

While Rosenstock himself was never attracted by nineteenth-century philosophy, he has related that, in 1913, Rosenzweig was not merely involved in his work on Hegel, but was still spiritually tied to Hegel. At the same time, Rosenzweig tried to observe as much of Rosenstock's life as possible, attending his lectures and seminars under the pretext of a sudden interest in medieval law. In answer to Rosenstock's query why he had come, Rosenzweig could offer only the evasive reply, "In order to get a feeling for juristic thinking."<sup>18</sup> Yet, both knew why he had come to Leipzig and understood what was at stake.

The relations between the two proceeded cautiously, yet cordially. They managed to meet daily at lunch. In his autobiography, Rosenstock relates that he used to leave these meetings in a hurry, because he "had to write a book." He had received his doctorate at the age of twenty, became a lecturer at the age of twenty-four and was racing through a university career at a young age. At that time he wrote *Kingdom and Tribes from 1014–1250*. Regarding Rosenstock's scholarly work, about which he had previously held a negative opinion, Rosenzweig now commented: "My doubts with regard to his future are no longer true. I can change my opinion to the extreme. He wrote his first real book. 'Wrote' is not the proper expression, he threw it out just like a volcano . . . the book is really easy to read."<sup>19</sup>

18. Ibid.

19. Ibid.

Internally, however, as Rosenstock writes in his memoirs, he was ready, in 1913, to abandon his university career permanently: "I learned that to be ingenious is one of the easiest things. I was called upon for war, love and sacrifice." Both friends shared their negative attitude to universities that *teach information, but do not show man his way*, as we see from the same source:

Rosenzweig came upon a fact that is as hard as a rock, a fact that he did not believe existed among German professors, that a man's soul is created just as is his body. He thought that all Christians are nothing but Greeks [meaning disbelievers], and when he read in the New Testament that "God is spirit" he felt nauseated, seeing how the academicians reach the Platonic heresy from this. And when he found one teacher at the university who thought that a true prayer is more important than a little bit of academic thought, and that a mission has more power and meaning than abstract concept, he realized that there is room for Christianity, and not simply for Christianity that fights Judaism, but for Christianity that fights the academic Platonic world.<sup>20</sup>

Their opposition to universities was serious and each in his own way left academic teaching. After the end of the First World War, Rosenstock devoted himself to the plight of factory workers and organized special evening courses for them. In addition, he founded labor camps that had a special religious atmosphere.<sup>21</sup> Rosenzweig, having never taken up a formal academic position, became the head of the *Lehrhaus* in Frankfurt, whose aim was the revival of Jewish life in Germany. Rosenstock was disillusioned with the university, viewing it as a descendant of the Greek Academy. Rosenzweig expressed this same critical attitude in a letter to Meinecke, in which he rejected the offer to join him at the University of Berlin:

In 1913, something happened to me for which collapse is the only fitting name. I suddenly found myself on a heap of wreckage, or, rather, I realized that the road I was then pursuing was flanked by universalities. Yet, this was the very road defined for me by my talents and my talents only! I began to sense how meaningless such a subjection to the dictates of one's talents was.<sup>22</sup>

Rosenzweig goes on to describe how he descended into his own being, layer after layer, until he found a treasure hidden there, his own treasure. At this point he left formal academics and his former way of life.

The relationship between Rosenzweig and Rosenstock was, as Rosenstock defined it, "existential"; there was a rare spiritual understanding between them. In numerous ways Rosenstock showed him that, in searching for a religious solution, he had had no choice but to convert.

20. Eugen Rosenstock-Huussy, *Ja und Nein: Autobiographische Fragmente* (Heidelberg, 1968), pp. 70-71.

21. H. Stahmer, "Speak That I May See Thee!": *The Religious Significance of Language* (New York: Macmillan, 1968), pp. 124-125.

22. Glatzer, *Franz Rosenzweig*, p. 95.



Many of their debates centered on the importance of Hegel for the religion of the twentieth century. Since he had found a meaningful approach to the Bible, Rosenstock's religious depth made it easy for him to attack Rosenzweig's shaky liberal view; Rosenzweig "lost" simply because he "agreed with him," and was satisfied with his own position. Since Hegel and the Absolute Being offered no concrete answers, there was no choice but Christianity. Judaism, a dead religion in Rosenstock's view, was not even a subject for the discussions.

The most dramatic debate was held on July 7, 1913. Only in May, 1969 did Rosenstock publish his version of that memorable night. A sentence by Selma Lagerlöf which reads

"Nobody can redeem men from their sufferings, but much shall be forgiven him who reencourages them to bear these sufferings" was the subject at that evening . . . It was chased around and around—and around again. Franz . . . defended the prevailing philosophical relativism of the day, whereas Eugen bore witness to prayer worship as the prime guides for action.<sup>23</sup>

Rosenzweig's version of that night is described in one of his letters:

I was inferior to him from the outset, since I had to recognize, for my part, the justice of his attack. If I could then have buttressed my dualism between God and the devil, I should have been unassailable. But I was prevented from doing so by the first sentence of the Bible.<sup>24</sup>

Rosenzweig realized that Christianity is *the* solution. According to Glatzer, Rosenzweig asked Rosenstock: "What would you do when all answers fail?" Rosenstock replied: "I would go to the next church, kneel and try to pray." "These simple words," says Glatzer, "did more than all the previous discussions. . . ."<sup>25</sup> Christianity is a living power. The question was: Could a Jew also pray?

Leaving Leipzig soon after that memorable night, Rosenzweig wrote: "All in all, I am satisfied with the results of the last half year."<sup>26</sup> A few weeks after that debate, Rosenstock also left Leipzig for an extended stay in Italy, and the two did not meet again for many months. As Rosenstock wrote only recently, he had had no idea that Rosenzweig was so impressed with the debate of that night, and that he wanted then, like Rosenstock, to devote his life to his faith.

### *On the Verge of Baptism and the Return to Judaism*

In the following months, Rosenzweig travelled in loneliness to Heidelberg, Stuttgart and Tübingen to gather documentary material for his book on Hegel. It seems that he could not find peace. In a letter to Rosenstock's wife, he later wrote:

23. Rosenstock-Huessy, *Judaism Despite Christianity*, pp. 72–73.

24. *Briefe*, p. 71.

25. Glatzer, *Franz Rosenzweig*, p. xv.

26. *Briefe*, p. 65.

From July to September, 1913 I was quite willing to die—to let everything within myself die . . . It is the extraordinary in us that God, in our case, has not only spoken to us through our lives; in addition, he has made the life around us fall down like the wings of a theatrical decoration, and on the empty stage he has spoken to us.<sup>27</sup>

It appears that, sometime in July, 1915, Rosenzweig promised his cousin, Rudolf Ehrenberg, who had been present at that last crucial discussion with Rosenstock, that he would be baptized. Later, Ehrenberg refused to reveal the details of the arrangements that had been made for the baptism. He related to B. Casper only that it had been agreed that he would be Rosenzweig's *Pate*, the godfather or sponsor who accepts him into Christianity.<sup>28</sup> It is assumed that a church was chosen and a date set for the baptism. Given Rosenzweig's concern for esthetic forms and external details, one suspects that perhaps more elaborate plans were made, though Ehrenberg refused to relate them.

What is clear from his letters is that Rosenzweig made one important condition: *He did not want to be baptized as a pagan but as a Jew*, a pagan meaning, in their language, a "nothing," a Hegelian, a Greek. He explained this condition as a "personal matter." Ehrenberg understood that it was Rosenzweig's intention to be baptized in the manner in which Jews of the early Christian centuries had come to the new religion. He knew that, in the New Testament, there is a clear distinction between the status of the Jewish nation and that of the other nations who do not know Jesus, and that, according to Christian teaching, the Jew is destined to keep the Torah until he has reached the New Testament, that is, its abolition. Paying little attention to Rosenzweig's desire to pass through Judaism. Rudolf Ehrenberg had been concerned only with his cousin's readiness to be baptized. What was important was that Rosenzweig would convert, at which point he would declare, as did Ehrenberg and Rosenstock, that Judaism is a meaningless religion for modern man. Having lost its vitality in the wake of the Emancipation and the Enlightenment, Judaism has finished its task, leaving the world only with Christianity.

What Ehrenberg did not understand was that Rosenzweig probably had set up this special condition because, in his subconscious, he still felt deep ties to Judaism and wanted to be a Jew at least once before leaving Judaism forever. On the surface, it is hard to imagine how he expected to be a Jew if his mind *was* made up that he was going to be baptized and deny Judaism. However, he later wrote to Ehrenberg:

You explained to yourself my position between Judaism and Christianity as being identified with that of early Christianity. . . . You assumed that Franz is a living branch of the first century, I . . . as that of the

27. *Judaism Despite Christianity*, p. 76. Rosenzweig's newly published letter speaks of the months of July-September, 1913. The date of the letter is June 15, 1920.

28. B. Casper, *Das dialogische Denken* (Freiburg, 1967), p. 77.

twentieth. I assumed that this branch lives and you thought that it is dry and dead.<sup>29</sup>

Our information on those decisive months, July to September, in which he struggled with himself, is still limited. It appears that Rosenstock wrote to him from Italy, but received no replies. He did not meet his Jewish friend, Joseph Prager, and Uncle Adam, who had told him, when he was a boy that "he should always remain a Jew,"<sup>30</sup> had died five years earlier. He was alone with himself, discarding the external world. It is surprising, after promising Rudolf, who had close ties with the family, that he would be baptized, that Rosenzweig did not speak with his parents about it until September. Such a silence may suggest that his mind was not yet completely made up.

On Rosh Hashanah, Rosenzweig was at his parents' home in Cassel. He visited the synagogue there, as he had earlier planned, most likely sitting in Uncle Adam's seat, which belonged to the family. He tried to pray in that cold environment, but the disharmony in his heart only increased. He was uninspired by the organ installed there, the latest fashions of the ladies and the shining top hats. The dynamic Dr. Isaac Prager, who had been rabbi of the community from 1885–1905, was no longer living, and the new rabbi, Dr. Max Doktor, was not inspiring. Rosenzweig was on the verge of collapse, seeing the end of Judaism.

A day or two after the New Year, his mind was finally made up and he went to inform his parents of his decision.<sup>31</sup> He entered the living room and said to his mother: "I want to talk to you." Knowing what was to come, she said: "You want to be baptized!" Franz no longer was afraid to face her and simply pointed to the New Testament in his hand: "Mother, here is everything, here is the truth. There is only one way, Jesus!" His mother asked: "Were you not in the synagogue on the New Year's day?" He replied: "Yes and I will go to the synagogue on Yom Kippur, too. I am still a Jew." His mother responded: "When I come in, I will ask them to turn you away. In our synagogue there is no room for an apostate." His mother did not understand that *especially* because he was considering conversion, he had gone to the synagogue, and that, despite her protestations, he would also go to pray on Yom Kippur.

In the end, the misunderstanding between them indirectly helped Rosenzweig, since he then left Cassel and sought a different house of prayer, a different environment, for Yom Kippur. He went back to Berlin where he had lived for years, working on his Hegel book. On that Yom Kippur, Rosenzweig went to the Orthodox synagogue, Pots-

29. *Briefe*, p. 72.

30. Prager, "*Begegnungen auf dem Wege*," p. 39.

31. Glatzer, *Franz Rosenzweig*, p. 25.

damer Brücke.<sup>32</sup> There he saw a different community of Jews and a different kind of rabbi, Marcus Petuchowski, who was versed in Jewish learning, knew Hebrew and was influential with youth.<sup>33</sup> Knowing, also, that this was his last chance, Rosenzweig had the urgent feeling that the burden of responsibility had been cast upon him. Cassel Jewry had left him cold inside, but, though lonely in Berlin, he suddenly realized his real direction. He had found his "most personal possessions"; he had, in brief, found the meaning of his life.

Twenty days after that Yom Kippur, he wrote to Rudolf Ehrenberg:

Dear Rudi, I must tell you something that will grieve you and may at first appear incomprehensible to you: after prolonged and, I believe, thorough self-examination, I have reversed my decision. It no longer seems necessary to me and, therefore, being what I am, no longer possible. I will remain a Jew."<sup>34</sup>

Rosenzweig never explicitly spoke of what occurred on that Yom Kippur, nor indicated that it had been crucial for his life and thought. Yet, there can be little doubt as to the enormous impact of that extraordinary experience. Rosenstock has no doubt that on that Yom Kippur his friend had a divine experience. He has told me, with excitement, that what Rosenzweig "saw" on that Yom Kippur was what a High Priest sees when he enters the Holy of Holies! Glatzer, who consulted Rosenzweig's mother, was the first to write of the great change that occurred in Rosenzweig's life through that visit to the synagogue, an event which thereafter became a legend. And the legend finds support in the fact that, in his subsequent writings, Rosenzweig speaks with unusual excitement of Yom Kippur, of revelation and of being called by name. From then on, revelation, the speech of the soul with God and its confession of sins before God, plays a central role.

Rosenzweig saw that the Jewish community praying together has a future, and that he could join it. His deep feeling for prayer has been related by Herman Badt,<sup>35</sup> who, in 1918, had been stationed with Rosenzweig in Poland. They always met on Sundays to discover the Jewish world in Warsaw—the *hedarim*, the *shuls* and the Hassidic *shtiblakh*. At that time, Rosenzweig was in mourning for his father and looked for a place to say *kaddish*. They arrived at a Hassidic *klois* for *Minḥah*, awaiting *Ma'ariv* so that he could say *kaddish* in the evening prayers also. But they had not noted that in this place *Minḥah* was said early and there was a whole hour until *Ma'ariv*. It so happened that in that

32. I have a letter, written in the spring of 1969, from Dr. Bruno Strauss, who told me that fact; Strauss was a friend of Rosenzweig in Berlin. Dr. Strauss died a few months after this communication.

33. *Der Israelit*, November 4, 1926.

34. Glatzer, *Franz Rosenzweig*, p. 28.

35. H. Badt, "Erinnerungen," in J. Prager, *Ein Buch des Gedenkens*, pp. 47-48.

dense Jewish neighborhood, every time one *minyan* finished a new one began. After they had heard *Minhah* four or five times, Badt suggested that they leave since there was a limit to his capacity for absorbing it. He also indicated that not all of the people actually took part in the prayer, and criticized the monotonous repetition of the same prayer ten times. Rosenzweig, speaking out of such deep feeling and conviction that Badt remembered it for years, rejected his friend's view and spoke with enthusiasm and excitement on the meaning of prayer. He said that from the communal prayer a fire is kindled. He spoke of the divine spark and of the concentration and emptying out of the soul when the prayers are delivered by the Reader.

It appears, if one takes *The Star of Redemption* as an autobiographical book, that one could reconstruct some clues of Rosenzweig's experience on that Yom Kippur. In his Cassel lectures of 1920,<sup>36</sup> he told his audience that they may not know what "extraordinary moments" are—they happen very rarely and as they occur they change man's life from the middle. But he wondered how, after such an experience, a man can continue his ordinary life, eat, drink, teach. etc. He also spoke of the experience of being reborn, like Saul becoming suddenly a king, or like a man whose sins have been forgiven.

One must admit that the proofs for an extraordinary experience on that Yom Kippur are not decisive. Glatzer's and Rosenstock's version seems convincing, but clearly a thinker might have reached a theory of "I and Thou" as presented in *The Star of Redemption* on purely philosophical calculations without such an autobiographical experience. In any case, it is clear that Rosenstock, despite his intentions, had opened up for Rosenzweig the gate to Judaism. Rosenstock had made it impossible for him to continue to deny the religious depth for which he had been searching. Though the realization came to Rosenzweig slowly, and he did not initially permit his heart to speak out, he did, finally, on that Yom Kippur, find the root of his soul. His decision to remain a Jew and to see in Judaism a vital force undoubtedly shocked Rosenstock and the *Hochschule*, where he became, for a time, an enthusiastic disciple of the late Hermann Cohen, in whom he found the support of a "great soul" and a "religious person" which he so needed at the moment of his own discovery of the meaning of his life in Judaism. In the years to come he turned his attention to Jewish Studies and the study of Hebrew, the tools needed for his new orientation. Yet, on the other hand, in terms of his understanding of Judaism and Christianity and his speech-thinking, he remained all of his life indebted to Rosenstock's teachings, speaking, even in his last years, of two true religions.

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36. I published their content in "Franz Rosenzweig's Unpublished Writings," *The Journal of Jewish Studies*, XX (1969): 64–65.

# Janusz Korczak: Assimilationist or Positive Jew?

SAMUEL CHIEL

ONE OF THE MOST BEAUTIFUL FIGURES TO emerge from the dark pages of the Holocaust is Janusz Korczak, physician, writer, educator. This year marks the thirty-third *yahrzeit* of his death which took place on August 5, 1942, the day on which he led the two hundred children of his orphanage to the Umschlagplatz (Reloading Point), in the Warsaw Ghetto, to be transported in sealed cars to their death in Treblinka.

Nobody denies Korczak his rightful place in the pantheon of heroic martyrs of the Holocaust. The question has been raised, however, as to whether Korczak may be counted among the ranks of positive Jews or, rather, as a saintly figure who happened to be born a Jew, but who was in actuality more proudly Polish than positively Jewish.

One of the most dramatic indictments of Korczak comes from one of his former disciples in the Jewish orphanage which he supervised. Hirsch Steinhart writes:

I was orphaned as a young child. My younger brother and I lived for a time in Dr. Janusz Korczak's orphanage, but we were not given a Jewish education there. Every child who was trained there became assimilated to his very core. My younger brother was unable to reacquire a Jewish balance. He speaks Yiddish only because the family spoke Yiddish, but he can't write or read the language. In truth, it must be admitted that Dr. Janusz Korczak was a rare human being, a great personality, a renowned physician, an outstanding author of children's stories, a good-hearted person. He gave his heart and soul to the young, unfortunate orphans. But he was also the greatest assimilationist that I met in my life.<sup>1</sup>

To attempt to answer the question of Korczak's Jewishness, we must examine his familial background as well as the critical incidents in his life which influenced him most deeply in this respect. He was born Henryk Goldszmit (Korczak was a *nom de plume* which he assumed as a youth) in Warsaw on July 22, 1878 (or 1879) to Joseph and Cecilia Goldszmit. His paternal grandfather, Hirsch Goldszmit, after whom Henryk was named, was a physician and was one of the leading *maskilim* in the city of Hrubieszow in the district of Lublin.<sup>2</sup> Hirsch was a patriotic Pole, who provided his children with a secular education,

1. Hanna Mordkovitz-Ultakova, *Hayyei Janusz Korczak* (Israel: Hakibbutz Hame-uḥad, 1961), p. 32.

2. Yakov Shatzky, *Geschichte Fun Yidn In Varsha* (New York: YIVO, 1947), III, p. 302.

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but was concerned about their attachment to the Jewish people and their knowledge of its culture.<sup>3</sup>

His son, Joseph, Henryk's father, became a well known attorney in Warsaw. He, too, showed a keen interest in Jewish history and culture, and in 1867, together with his brother, Jacob, began to publish a series of monographs on great Jewish personalities of the nineteenth century. In 1871, he published a major work entitled *An Explanation of the Law of Divorce According to the Laws of the Torah and the Talmud*.

When Henryk was eleven years old, his father became mentally ill, and from that critical juncture his mother took charge of the boy's upbringing and education. His most recent biographer contends that, had Korczak's father been well, he would have provided him with a solid grounding in Jewish culture. His mother, who was a thoroughly assimilated woman, saw the need for educating Henryk only as a patriotic Polish gentleman.

In his Memoirs, written in the last months of his life, Korczak mentions his first awareness of his Jewishness, which came at the age of five. His beloved canary had died and he buried it in the courtyard of his house. He wrote:

Its death brought up the mysterious question of religion.

I wanted to put a cross on the grave. The housemaid said no, because it's only a bird, something much lower than man. Even to cry was a sin.

So much for the housemaid. It was worse that the caretaker's son had decided that the canary was a Jew.

Me, too. (He informed Korczak that he was, like his canary, a Jew.)

I was a Jew, and he—a Pole, a Catholic. Paradise for him. As for me, if I did not swear and submissively steal sugar for him from the house, I would end up, when I died, in a place which, though not hell, was dark. And I was scared of a dark room.

Death—Jew—hell. The black Jewish paradise. Certainly something to consider.<sup>5</sup>

This incident, which remained vivid to him to the end of his days, appears to indicate that, even while his father was well, Korczak was quite unaware of his Jewishness. First, his desire to place a cross on the canary's grave shows that he was apparently aware only of this Christian symbol and not of a Jewish one. Second, the information that he was a Jew was apparently imparted to him, presumably for the first time, by his Catholic playmate and not by his father. Significantly, this first awareness of his Jewishness came in the association with a great personal loss and with the startling dictum that Jews end up in a "dark"

3. Gedalyah Alkushi, *Janusz Korczak b'Ivrit* (Israel: Hakibbutz Hame'uhad, 1972), p. 10.

4. Ibid., p. 70.

5. Martin Wolins, *Selected Works of Janusz Korczak* (Warsaw: National Science Foundation, 1967), p. 581.



place, information which was not likely to enhance Korczak's estimation of his Jewish heritage.

### *Anti-Semitism*

Korczak had been raised to believe in himself as a proud, patriotic Polish citizen, filled with hope for the future greatness of Poland and the equal rights of all its citizens. But the spectre of Polish anti-Semitism was to cast its shadow upon his treasured hopes and, at the same time, would make him more aware of his own Jewishness.

As editor of the Polish-Jewish children's newspaper, *Mali Pshaglund*, he recalled a searing childhood memory. As he was returning from school one day, he saw somebody throw a stone at a Jewish boy:

One began, and others followed suit. I saw the blood running from his face. The worst part of the whole incident was that he did not even defend himself, he didn't cry out, he just crouched and stayed there. And they kept on throwing stones. They saw that he was bleeding and yet they kept on throwing.<sup>6</sup>

Not only did this incident demonstrate for him the cruelty of anti-Semitism; it also showed him the passivity with which the Jewish boy accepted the cruelty and, thus, how accustomed he must have been to such an attack.

After the Russian-Japanese War of 1905 and the abortive Polish revolution against Russia, the Jewish communities of Russia and Poland suffered a number of anti-Semitic pogroms. Perhaps as a reaction to these attacks, Korczak began to identify himself more closely with the Jewish community. In 1908, he became an active member of the *Ezrat Yetomim* in Warsaw, and in 1912 he was appointed supervisor of the Jewish orphanage "The Children's Home" on 92 Krochmalna Street, a position to which he was to dedicate the rest of his life.

When Poland achieved its independence on November 3, 1918, Korczak, who had hoped for that day as ardently as a believing Jew prays for the Messiah, found, to his great disillusionment, that the new government was riddled with anti-Semitism. When, on April 19, 1919, a number of pogroms broke out against the Jews in Bialistok, Pinsk, Warsaw, Vilna, and other places, the government did not intercede nor did it punish the criminals.

In 1920, war broke out between Communist Russia and Poland, and when the Polish army was defeated, there were anti-Semitic outbreaks in the Polish army and among the Polish masses against the Jews who were accused of being responsible for the defeat.

All of this had a devastating effect upon Korczak. In addition, he saw Jewish children insulted and attacked in the streets. During this

6. Janusz Korczak, *Ketavim Pedagogyim* (Israel: Hakibbutz Hame-uhad, 1962), p. 162.

bitter period he was asked by a concerned lady whether enough precautions were being taken to prevent the possibility of a child's drowning in the summer camp for orphans which he supervised. He answered with a sad smile:

"Is that what you are worried about? And what if they drown? Isn't that the best way out for a Jewish orphan?"<sup>7</sup>

Korczak had written many children's stories, often about the daily struggle of the worker, who usually succeeds, in one way or another, to survive and to preserve his dignity. During this period, between the two World Wars, the stories begin to emphasize the difficulties of the Jewish minority, their economic and social problems, their dreams of emigrating to distant lands. In some he deals with the problems of Jews living in Erez Yisrael, their adjustment to the life of the kibbutz, and their need to change the pattern of their lives.

The emphasis in the stories is essentially the same: people are basically good, and if they behave unjustly or cruelly, it is usually because of the many worries and troubles that beset them. At the same time, his stories attempt to show the many acts of goodness and kindness of which adults and children are capable.<sup>8</sup>

In 1936, after Hitler's rise to power in Germany, the racist policies of the Polish government and the anti-Semitism of the Polish masses grew more intense. During that year, he was to suffer two traumatic blows which were to sever permanently his relationship with the general Polish society that had always been so important to him.

In 1935, Korczak was invited to conduct a radio program for children. He called it "Little Radio Talks," and through them he was able to explain his psychological and educational attitudes towards the process of raising children with dignity and with love. The program attracted a very wide audience of adults and children, even though his identity was never revealed. The anti-Semitic management of the radio station would not permit it to be known that a Jew was broadcasting from their station and he was, therefore, identified only as "The Old Doctor." He agreed to this humiliating requirement because he felt that only in this way would he be able to spread the message of his faith in children and in humanity.

In 1936, however, as the pressure of anti-Semitism became increasingly intense, the "Old Doctor" was removed from his radio program. As if this were not enough, at about the same time Korczak was struck another blow that precipitated a severe depression.

Some seventeen years before, in 1919, with the help of groups of

7. Ultzakova, *Op. cit.*, p. 79.

8. Tzvi A. Kurzweil, *Mishnato Ha-hinukhit Shel Dr. Janusz Korszak* (Tel Aviv: Mifalei Tarbut ve-Hinukh, 1968), pp. 45-49.

trade organizations, there was established in Pruszkow, near Warsaw, an orphanage for workers' children called "Nasz Dom" (Our House). Together with the educator, Marina Falska, Korczak shared in the administration of the orphanage. He lived there two days each week and introduced the same educational philosophy and methods for these Polish children as he had for the Jewish children in their orphanage.

For reasons that are not altogether clear, in 1936 Korczak was relieved of his responsibilities. Perhaps there was a clash of personalities between himself and Miss Falska; it is likely, however, that the anti-Semitic policies of the government were at least as important a factor.<sup>9</sup>

These two traumas caused Korczak to fall into a depression which lasted several months. He saw these two incidents not only as personal attacks but, more important, as symbols of the disintegration of the ideals of brotherhood and freedom of thought which he so cherished. It was at this point that he decided to flee from Poland to begin a new life in Erez Yisrael, a resolve which was to be very short-lived. Korczak was always a lonely figure.

A solitary wanderer, everywhere respected as a decent foreigner. Nationalist and clericalist Poles could not forgive him his Jewish origin. Unassimilated Jews saw in him a Polish writer, a representative of Polish culture. The social left wing, active revolutionary youth above all, was repulsed by his skepticism and by his not linking the problem of the child with the struggle for a change in the social structure; conservatives saw him as a leftist, almost a bolshevik in the matter of children. In literary society, he would not join any group or school—he was admired but with a tinge of regret, as a great talent but an illegitimate offspring of pedagogics which were treated with some contempt. The pedagogues were alarmed by his aspect of an iconoclast....<sup>10</sup>

The more detached Korczak became from Polish society, the closer he came to the Jewish people. In 1924, he became a regular contributor to a new Yiddish monthly, *Dos Kind*. In 1925, he was one of ten signatories to a declaration directed at Polish Jewish intelligentsia asking them to support the Jewish National Fund. During these years, he also developed close relationships with a number of leaders of the Hashomer Hazair movement in Warsaw, which would later lead to an affectionate association with Erez Yisrael.

To return to our original question: was Korczak an assimilationist or a positive Jew, the answer is not a simple "yes" or "no," but must take into account his philosophical development. In his early years, he was assimilated into Polish society and dreamed of the brotherhood of all men, to be exemplified in a free, independent Poland. As his dream became increasingly unreal in the light of Polish and German anti-Semitism, so did he become increasingly concerned with the problems

9. Ultzakova, *Op. cit.*, p. 126.

10. Wolins, *Op. cit.*, pp. xxxvii-xxxviii.

facing the Jew and the role of Erez Yisrael as an attempt to provide a solution to these problems.<sup>11</sup>

From almost the beginning of his professional career, it is significant that Korczak was drawn to the Jewish child.<sup>12</sup> For thirty years, he gave his greatest effort and strength to the protection and growth of his Jewish orphans, though he was very willing to do the same for non-Jewish children as well. Whether he did so consciously or not, he was fulfilling one of the greatest *mizvot* of Jewish tradition. The Talmud, for example, interprets the verse from the Psalms: "Blessed is he who does righteousness at all times" (106:3) as referring to one who devotes himself to the care of orphans.

To the very end, Korczak never completely lost his hope for a better future. In the last months of the orphanage's existence, as the Nazis made them move from place to place, Korczak decided to create a flag as a symbol of the orphanage. One side was green with superimposed leaves of the chestnut tree, connoting eternal growth and a better future. On the other side, on a white background, there was the Magen David—the star which the Nazis compelled every Jew to wear as a mark of ignominy, but which Korczak used for his children as a symbol of the Jewish will to live and the inability of the enemy to destroy Israel's pride and eternity as a people.<sup>13</sup>

### *Erez Yisrael*

If anti-Semitism was a major factor in bringing Korczak closer to his people, Erez Yisrael was an equally important factor in the same process. It may have been that Polish anti-Semitism created his initial interest in Erez Yisrael, but Erez Yisrael preoccupied him more and more.

A fellow student at Warsaw University, Yitzchak Greenbaum, reports a conversation between himself and Korczak which indicates Korczak's early hostility to the Zionist Movement and to Jewish concerns:

I met with Henryk Goldszmit when we were both students at the Warsaw University . . . we began a conversation which lasted for hours. We spoke about all kinds of matters, amongst which, naturally, we spoke about Jewish matters at the University and in the world. Goldszmit's words were full of poisonous ridicule . . . this was the accepted style of the wealthy sons of assimilated families.<sup>14</sup>

Though Korczak became friendly with leaders of the Hashomer Hatzair movement in Warsaw between the two World Wars and they repeatedly urged him to visit Erez Yisrael, as late as 1928, he continued to demur. In a letter to a friend, Esther Bodko, he writes:

11. Kurzweil, *Op. cit.*, p. 52.

12. Moshe Zartal, *Bim'hizato Shel Janusz Korczak* (Israel: Sifriat Poalim, 1962), p. 27.

13. Ultzakova, *Op. cit.*, pp. 142-143.

14. Alkushi, *Op. cit.*, p. 71.

We have become acclimatized body and soul to the land of pines, snow, and galut. The attempt to tie the ends of the thread which were severed two thousand years ago is difficult. Ultimately it will succeed, because this is a demand of history, but how great the efforts and the pain...

The years remaining to me are too few to dedicate ten years to a physical and spiritual assimilation to new conditions of breathing, seeing, and digesting. Meanwhile, I do not feel the need to see, I am satisfied to read and think (about the land).

The problem of "man," his past and future upon the earth, casts a shadow for me upon the problem of "the Jew."<sup>15</sup>

Korczak's dream of universal brotherhood had been bruised but was still intact, still stronger for him than the dream of the *ḥaluzim* to create a home for Jews in Erez Yisrael.

A very important personality who helped Korczak administer the Jewish orphanage was his faithful co-worker, Stefania Wilczynska, who was in charge of the daily affairs of the orphanage, from its beginnings at Krochmalna Street to the final procession with Korczak and the children to the Umschlagplatz before their death. She, too, became interested in Erez Yisrael, made her first visit in 1930, and at once fell in love with the land. Her visit and her glowing reports no doubt had an important impact on Korczak.

Two years later, he began to show a greater appreciation of Erez Yisrael, but mainly because of its great potential for the healthy nurturing of misunderstood children:

... if there is a country where they honestly permit to the child his dreams and dissatisfactions, his longings and ambivalences—perhaps it is Erez Yisrael. In that land there should stand a monument to the "Unknown Orphan."...

I have not given up the hope that I shall spend the few years remaining to me in Erez Yisrael, longing for Poland.<sup>16</sup>

This statement well illustrates Korczak's own ambivalence. Seven months later, May 15, 1933, he wrote to his friend, Yosef Arnon:

If fate were to will that I were to come to Erez Yisrael, I would not come to the people but rather to the ideas that would be generated in me there... What would Mt. Sinai say to me, the Jordan, the sepulchre of Jesus Christ, the University, the caves of the Maccabees, the Kinneret... And I would, in the light of these ideas, relive two thousand years of the history of Europe, Poland, and the wandering of the Jews.<sup>17</sup>

Korczak finally did visit Erez Yisrael in 1934 for a period of six weeks, most of which he spent at Kibbuz Ein Harod. He was very much impressed with the accomplishments of the *ḥaluzim* but, still, he returned to Poland with the feeling of having been a tourist who had now returned to his own country.

On July 15, 1936, Korczak left for Israel for a second visit. This

15. Ultzakova, *Op. cit.*, pp. 117-118.

16. Korczak, *Ketavim Pedagogym*, p. 202.

17. *Ibid.*, p. 202.

time he arranged to meet members of the Hashomer Hazair, since he had previously spent most of his stay in Ein Harod. He also was interested to learn more about the moshavim and the religious settlement of the Hasidim of the rabbi of Yablona.

Soon after his return from this second trip to Israel, Korczak was confronted with the dual trauma, noted earlier, of being forced to end his radio broadcasts and of severing his relationship with the Polish orphanage, "Nasz Dom." After his subsequent depression, he decided to settle in Erez Yisrael. In a letter to the family of Dr. Lichtenstein, dated March 29, 1937, he announced:

After a depression which lasted for months—I decided to try a last experiment: to spend my last years in Erez Yisrael, temporarily in Jerusalem; there, to study Hebrew, so I shall be able to move by the end of the year to a Kibbutz . . . My journey should begin next month for I cannot long bear the uncertainty of the situation here.<sup>18</sup>

The next day, in another letter, this one to Moshe Zilbertal, he elaborated his plans further:

Old, tired and without means—I will try my last experiment. A great effort and I am making it unwillingly—as if not by my own will, but by command.—The command of fate? Therefore, precisely in May, I shall depart (?) for Erez Yisrael—specifically, to Jerusalem—for one year. I must learn the language there.—And after that, wherever I shall be invited. . . .

The most difficult part was my decision.—I can't wait much longer. I would already like tomorrow to sit in my small, narrow room in Jerusalem, a Tanakh in front of me, with books, a Hebrew dictionary, paper and pencil . . . so that I might be able to say: a new page—the last chapter.

When I walk in the street, and the children hurry to school—I feel my lack of strength, my superfluity. I feel responsible for every injustice that is done to them. And I can stand it no longer. . . .<sup>19</sup>

The whole mood of the letter is not one of optimism or enthusiasm—it is, rather, the mood of a man who is broken in spirit, who feels that he can no longer be of help to his orphans; and who looks to Erez Yisrael as a last refuge, a place to spend his last years among friends, to write the "last chapter" of his life.

By the time the month of May arrived, however, Korczak had already decided that he could not go to Erez Yisrael. On May 23, 1937, he wrote to Zilbertal:

To depart and to come to you—the responsibility to what I leave here, and to what I owe there. Will I be able to carry it through?—The risk—there is the possibility of failure. . . . To disappoint trust—this is unjust and shameful. I became frightened at the last moment. . . .<sup>20</sup>

Why did Korczak ultimately decide that he could not emigrate to Israel? One of the problems was the language barrier. He had great dif-

18. *Ibid.*, p. 197.

19. *Idem.*

20. *Ibid.*, p. 199.

ficulty in learning Hebrew and he was very fearful that he would not be able to communicate, either with the adults or, what was to him far more crucial, with the children. For a man who was a master of the Polish language, whose prose style was elegant and poetic, to find it impossible to write well in Hebrew would be a great frustration. Even more, for a pedagogue who spent most of his life speaking and communicating with children, the barrier of a new and difficult language seemed an insurmountable problem.<sup>21</sup>

His co-worker, Stefanie Wilczynska, attempted to teach him Hebrew, but without success. A friend of his, Michael Zylberberg, mentions this effort in his diary:

Dr. Korczak found it impossible to learn Hebrew and had been unable to communicate with the children in Palestine. This was a sad experience for him, as children meant more to him than anything else. He often tried, in the ghetto, to learn some Hebrew phrases, but without success. Miss Wilczynska was mildly amused at this weak spot in his intellectual make-up and regarded him as a lost cause. Not, I must admit, without reason.<sup>22</sup>

Another reason for his decision not to emigrate, which he mentions in letters to friends in Erez Israel, was lack of funds; he had 1,000 Polish Gulden (the equivalent of forty pounds sterling), and was concerned about earning a livelihood. His uncertainty about what he might do to make a worthwhile contribution to the land also influenced his decision.

But what was undoubtedly the most important of all his reasons was the fact that he simply could not leave his children. In a moment of depression, it was possible to indulge in the fantasy of ridding himself of all his responsibilities, but when the depression had passed, he could not tear himself away from the cause to which he had dedicated his entire life.

After he decided against leaving Poland, he determined, instead, to visit Polish Jews living in small communities throughout the country in order to be of help to them. If he could not be of help to the kibbutzim and moshavim in Erez Yisrael, perhaps he could still do something for the isolated Jews living in the villages and hamlets of Poland. On May 12, 1937, he wrote to the family of Dr. Lichtenstein:

. . . I am planning to travel in the small towns of Poland. Why should I not spend my years here in the way I spent last summer in Erez Yisrael?—By train, car, and wagon. Perhaps, despite everything, something worthwhile, some kind of service. Perhaps I am deceiving myself, but perhaps there can be some easing of their burdens, because despite everything, somebody is still interested. In truth, the Jews here are poor—for they—to their sorrow or to their good fortune—are honest, and do

21. Dov Sadan, "*Nekhdo Shel Zagag*," in Utzakova, *Op. cit.*, p. 219.

22. Michael Zylberberg, *A Warsaw Diary* (London: Vallentine, Mitchell & Co., Ltd., 1969), pp. 26–27.



not understand why all this is happening to them. . . . I feel compassion for them, because the shrewd ones will always find a way for themselves.<sup>23</sup>

He carried out this plan and during the summer of 1937 did travel to many parts of the small communities in which Jews resided. He gave lectures about his visits to Israel and also spoke to teachers and parents about pedagogical problems. He gave encouragement and inspiration to a Jewish community which was dispirited and fearful, in the face of the anti-Semitic atmosphere of Poland and the ever-growing strengths of Nazi Germany.

### *Summary*

Was Korczak an assimilationist or a positive Jew? Brought up in a thoroughly assimilated atmosphere, in his early years he was more Polish than Jewish. Confronted with increasing anti-Semitism, his dream of universal brotherhood was shattered and he began to show increasing interest in the plight of the Jew in Erez Yisrael. His associations with leaders from Erez Yisrael and his two visits to that country gave him a new interest and concern for the future of Palestine and its settlers. Life's buffetings tempted him to leave Poland, but his sense of responsibility was too great for him to be able to carry through this resolve. Yet, he sensed that though he could not be a part of the rebuilding of Erez Yisrael, he could still do more for his fellow Jews than he had done previously, by interesting himself in the plight of the poor, suffering Jews of the villages and *shtetlakh* of Poland. In his latter years, Korczak devoted himself entirely to his Jewish orphans and to the Jewish communities of Poland, who were also orphaned by the land and by the people who rejected, despised and persecuted them.

23. Korczak, *Ketavim Pedagogyim*, p. 199.

# *Where Does the Modern Period of Jewish History Begin?*

MICHAEL A. MEYER

THE ENDEAVOR TO DIVIDE HISTORY INTO DISTINCT and meaningful periods has met with so little success that contemporary historians have treated the subject with utmost caution. Grand theoretical speculations, such as the bold efforts of Hegel to assert clearly defined stages in the development of the human spirit, or of Marx to locate similar stages in the various forms of production, have all come to grief at the hands of empirical inquiry. Few historians today still believe that world history allows of any simple, precise division, let alone that any suggested plan is rooted in the very nature of reality. All-embracing schemes of periodization, nearly everyone now acknowledges, rest more on stipulation than on inference. Though a division of some kind is still considered necessary as an instrument for understanding turning points and transitions in history, each proposal is generally recognized as merely provisional, subject to correction not only by new evidence, but, also, by the lengthened perspective gained in the passage of time.<sup>1</sup>

For Jewish history, periodization is fraught with all of the methodological difficulties that attend the division of world history. Scattered among the nations, the Jews have participated to varying degrees in simultaneous and successive foreign civilizations while at the same time carrying on their own heritage. The very diversity and uniqueness of their Diaspora experience have militated against any agreement on its division. Though the major Jewish historians have all had to utilize some system of periodization to organize their material, they have differed vastly in the schemes which they employed. In part, methodological considerations have determined this divergence of systems, but, to no small degree, religious and ideological motivations have played a role as well. Nowhere is the operation of both factors more apparent and instructive than with regard to the problem of setting the threshold of the modern period in Jewish history. In fact, tracing the various theories regarding the onset of Jewish modernity reflects with amazing clarity both the course of Jewish historical thinking and the shifting

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1. See George H. Nadel, "Periodization," *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences* (New York, 1968), XI, pp. 581-85.

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conceptions of Jewish existence that have characterized the last hundred and fifty years.

The first Jewish scholar since Josephus to undertake a comprehensive history of the Jews was Isaac Marcus Jost, a German Jew who wrote a nine-volume *History of the Israelites* that was published from 1820 to 1828. Jost grew up in the period when German Jewry was given its first measure of civil equality. Responding to this new situation, a considerable segment of the community had come to see in the changed political attitude a sharp break with the past or even to perceive the messianic prospect of full Jewish participation in the political and cultural life of Europe. Although by the time when Jost began to write his history, the post-Napoleonic reaction had cast serious doubts on the realization of that hope, he remained of the opinion that an unalterable process had been set in motion, and, as a loyal Prussian, he chose to see its origins in Prussia. Jost, therefore, designated 1740 as the beginning of modern Jewish history, since, in that year, Frederick the Great ascended the Prussian throne. He realized, of course, that Frederick's policy had, if anything, been more restrictive toward the Jews than were the regulations of the monarchs who had preceded him. But, even as late as 1846, Jost still claimed that the enlightened despot had awakened a spirit

which strides over the ghetto walls and glances into the dismal apartments of the Jewish streets . . . ; it declares liberty to the oppressed, and this one word, even before its content is grasped and appreciated, arouses the soul to glad hope and the yearning for a better life.<sup>2</sup>

Since Jost was writing for German gentiles as well as for Jews, he doubtless wanted to link the turning point of the modern age in Jewish history with the monarch who had brought Prussia to a position of power in Europe. At the same time, he tried to make his Jewish readers appreciative of what they owed to the Prussian state. It was, he thought, in response to this new enlightened spirit emanating from Frederick that the fundamental transformations in the Jewish community which generated modernity came about: the decline of unquestioned rabbinic authority, the shift from a corporate entity to a religious denomination, and the increasing participation by Jews in German cultural and political life. With the origin of these changes in Prussia, Jost saw the beginning of a new epoch for all Jewry, one which he termed "the age of spiritual liberation."

Jewish writers contemporary with Jost shared his sense of living in a new and hopeful time both for Europe and for the Jews. That was certainly true of the young Leopold Zunz and his circle when they laid the foundations of the scientific study of Judaism, declaring that the time had come to render account of a past that was now closed and

2. *Neuere Geschichte der Israeliten* (Berlin, 1846), I, p. 7.

determining to use their scholarly tools to further the process of political and cultural integration. When Nahman Krochmal, the profound Galician Jewish philosopher and historian, divided Jewish history into successive cycles of growth, blossoming and decay, he chose to conclude the most recent period of decline with the Cossack persecutions of the mid-17th century. His own age, by implication, represented a new period of germination, the first stage of a fresh cycle.<sup>3</sup>

The best-known of the 19th-century Jewish historians, Heinrich Graetz, did not, however, fully share the earlier messianic enthusiasm. A severe moral critic of modern European culture,<sup>4</sup> he set the Redemption far into the future. But, like Jost, he, too, thought that the most significant break in recent Jewish history had occurred in the preceding century. Because of his predilection for the internal intellectual history of the Jews, and his ascription of the dominant role in historical change to prominent individuals, Graetz assigned the beginning of the modern period of Jewish history to the appearance of Moses Mendelssohn. In the biography of this first significant figure to link Judaism with modern European culture, Graetz found what he called "a model for the history of the Jews in modern times, for their upward striving from lowliness and contempt to greatness and self-consciousness."<sup>5</sup>

Graetz's selection of Moses Mendelssohn as the turning point met severe challenge a generation later at the hands of Eastern Europe's most significant Jewish historian, Simon Dubnow. For him, Graetz's selection was questionable on three grounds. First it was—no less than Jost's view—distinctly Germano-centric. Beginning with Mendelssohn, Graetz had gone on to devote two-thirds of his last volume to tracing developments in Germany—supposedly set in motion by Mendelssohn—while paying scant attention to the vastly larger Jewish settlement in Eastern Europe. Second, Graetz's emphasis on the role of individuals and of intellectual processes in history was out of keeping with the positivist approach that had meanwhile come to dominate European historiography and had influenced Dubnow. Finally, Dubnow simply could not see in Mendelssohn a model for the modern period. The Jewish philosopher's cherished goal of acculturation ran directly counter to Dubnow's autonomist ideology which advocated separate, highly independent, communal entities within the frameworks of non-Jewish states. Dubnow favored political integration within the larger society but, at the same time, argued for cultural separatism. It is, therefore, not surprising that in his own writing he should have linked Jewish modernity to political, rather than cultural, transformation. In his *World History*

3. *Kitvei Rabbi Nahman Krochmal*, ed. Simon Rawidowicz (Berlin, 1924), p. 112.

4. See his anonymously published *Briefwechsel einer englischen Dame über Judentum und Semitismus* (Stuttgart, 1883).

5. *Geschichte der Juden* (Leipzig, 1870), XI, p. 3.

of the *Jewish People* which appeared in the 1920's, it is the French Revolution, the period when the Jews first gained citizenship, and not the beginning of the Haskalah, the Jewish enlightenment, which serves as the watershed.<sup>6</sup> And it is the process of political emancipation which began here—including the setbacks which it suffered—that serves him as the dominant motif of the modern age.

More recently, the majority of Jewish historians have preferred to fix the boundary line about a century or more before the French Revolution. They have chosen the earlier threshold for a variety of reasons. The most blatantly ideological justification for such an earlier *terminus a quo* is that which was given by Ben Zion Dinur, who died just recently after a productive and influential career as professor of Jewish history at The Hebrew University in Jerusalem. As an ardent Zionist, Dinur could not resist selecting the first evidence for a movement of return to the Land as the beginning of the modern period of Jewish history. What acculturation had been for Graetz and emancipation for Dubnow, Zionism became for Dinur. One might have expected him, therefore, to select a very late date, perhaps the appearance of the first Zionist classic, Moses Hess's *Rome and Jerusalem*, in 1862, or the formation of the Hibat Zion movement and the agricultural settlement which it fostered in the 1880's, or even the publication of Herzl's *The Jewish State* in 1896. Instead, however, Dinur chose the year 1700, for in that year Rabbi Judah the Pious led some one thousand Jews to Palestine. For Dinur, this symbolic event (the immigration was actually a failure) was portentous for the future. It represented the beginnings of a rebellion against the *galut* and the endeavor to seek Israel's national salvation in its own land.<sup>7</sup>

Dinur's theory effectively eliminates Diaspora Jewish modernity from the basic structure of Jewish history. Its commonly accepted characteristics are not determinative of an age. Although Dinur does recognize the relative significance of Jewish emancipation and acculturation, these are essentially conceived as forces making for Jewish national dissolution and as foils—albeit necessary—for the primary process, which is the rebuilding of the Jewish nation in Palestine. Unlike Diaspora Jewish historians, Dinur placed a definite final terminus on this modern period. It concluded in November 1947 with the United Nations resolution to establish a Jewish state and with the declaration of its coming into existence the following spring. The modern era, thus, lasted almost exactly 250 years and the birth of the State of Israel brought it to an

6. In this view, as he himself acknowledged, Dubnow was anticipated by Martin Philippson, *Neueste Geschichte des jüdischen Volkes*, 3 vols. (Leipzig, 1907–11). From a Marxist perspective it was later adopted by Raphael Mahler, *Divrei Yemei Yisrael* (Merhavia, 1969), p. 22.

7. *Israel and the Diaspora* (Philadelphia, 1969), pp. 79–161.

end. With 1948 this final stage of Diaspora Jewish history has definitely reached its climax. For the last generation, Jewish history has been essentially post-modern, the history of the people in its land with that portion which remains on the Diaspora periphery playing, at best, a secondary role.

Gershom Scholem's revisionism has been much less obviously ideological, but he, too, has had a specific purpose in view. He has devoted most of his life to establishing the central significance of the kabbalah, not merely as a byroad of Jewish history, as Graetz insisted, but as a main highway. Scholem has shown that the kabbalistically influenced, Sabbatian, pseudo-messianic movement of the 17th century had an enormous influence in its time, and he has tried to raise its significance even further by arguing that it made possible Jewish modernity. The unorthodox theses of the radical Sabbatians, their ideological doctrines, as well as their attitude toward practice, Scholem has argued, shattered the world of traditional Judaism beyond repair. Once these messianists ceased to be "believers," they could no longer return to contemporary rabbinic Judaism. Instead, "when the flame of their faith finally flickered out, they soon reappeared as leaders of Reform Judaism, secular intellectuals, or simply complete and indifferent skeptics."<sup>8</sup> Scholem would thus not only regard the Jewish history of the late 16th and 17th centuries as dominated by kabbalism and pseudo-messianism, but would make even the anti-mystical Judaism of 19th-century Western Europe ironically, embarrassingly—and unconvincingly—an outgrowth of it.

Other Jewish historians have shared Scholem's preference for the 17th century but have argued for the determinative significance of factors other than mysticism and messianism. Shmuel Ettinger, currently professor of modern Jewish history at The Hebrew University, has developed the theory that the emergence of the centralized absolutistic state was the most crucial factor in initiating the changes that differentiated modern Jewish existence from previous forms. The new state was no longer willing to tolerate separate corporate entities with their own structures of law and authority. The resulting deprivation of Jewish communal autonomy spurred the integration of the Jews into European society and resulted in the intellectual response of the Haskalah.<sup>9</sup> But, for Ettinger, the process of cultural and political integration, set in motion by the development of the centralized state, was characteristic of modern Jewish history only during the first of two stages. Beginning with the resurgence of anti-Semitism in the 1880's, a reversal took place which resulted in the success of Jewish nationalism and the creation of the

8. *The Messianic Idea in Judaism* (New York, 1971), pp. 125–26, 140–41.

9. *Toldot Am Yisrael Mi-Yemei Ha-absolutism ad Lehakamat Medinat Yisrael* (Jerusalem, 1968), p. 2.

Jewish state. For Ettinger, as for Dinur, the establishment of the state constitutes the climax of modern Jewish history.<sup>10</sup>

Finally, we may consider the view of Salo Baron, the dean of Jewish historians in America. It, too, focuses on the 17th century, except that for Baron no single factor is determinative:

The Jewish Emancipation era has often been dated from the formal pronouncements of Jewish equality of rights by the French Revolution, or somewhat more obliquely, by the American Constitution. However, departing from this purely legalistic approach, I have long felt that the underlying more decisive socioeconomic and cultural transformations accompanying the rise of modern capitalism, the rapid growth of Western populations, the international migrations, the after-effects of Humanism, the Reformation, and the progress of modern science, long antedated these formal constitutional fiat. While such developments can never be so precisely dated as legal enactments, treaties, wars, or biographies of leading personalities, the mid-seventeenth century may indeed be considered a major turning point in both world and Jewish history.<sup>11</sup>

Baron's enumeration of such a variety of causes leaves little room for criticizing the selection of a particular feature to the exclusion or relative diminution of others. But his direct linkage of Jewish modernity with phenomena of world history which had only limited, indirect, or delayed effect upon the Jews raises serious doubts; the general transformations which he lists here—important as they were for general history—had little modernizing influence on any considerable segment of the Jews in Europe in the 17th century. No less subject to dispute is his willingness to set a single watershed at a distinct point in time—and even to declare in the title of the later volumes of his *A Social and Religious History of the Jews* that the "Late Middle Ages" of the Jews stretches specifically from 1200 to 1650.

Of course, neither Baron nor any Jewish historian, from Jost down to the present, has regarded the exact line of demarcation which he chose as more than symbolic. All were far too aware of the gradual passing of one age into another to assume that such precise boundaries could be anything other than instrumental or suggestive. Yet, the fact that they have selected a particular year or, at least, a limited period of time during which, they argue, the chief characteristics of modern Jewish history made their appearance, itself raises a number of serious questions which have yet to be resolved.

Perhaps the most basic question concerns the principal causes and characteristics of modernity. It seems most unlikely that agreement here will be achieved, not only because of the continued effect of ideology, but, also, because economic, social and intellectual influences will continue to be weighted as variously by Jewish historians as they are by

10. *Toldot Am Yisrael Ba-et Hahadashah* (Tel Aviv, 1969).

11. *A Social and Religious History of the Jews* (New York, 1965), IX, p. v.



their colleagues in general history. At present, Jewish scholars span the entire gamut—from Marxist economic determinism to an idealism which largely ignores the relevance of societal change. In particular, it is by no means resolved whether the Jewish Enlightenment and Emancipation were primarily a response to the rise of capitalist modes of production, to the need for more efficient government, or to a more favorable social attitude emanating from a growing class of liberal intellectuals. Nor is there agreement whether what is basic for Jewish history is demography (and, hence, the change in the migration pattern from west-to-east to east-to-west in the 17th century would loom as a decisive event), or community structure and cohesion, or the intellectual and emotional world of the individual Jew.

But even if there could be agreement on the characteristics determinative of the modern period, difference of opinion would remain as to when they emerged. Even if economic, political, and cultural integration be taken together as representative of Jewish modernity, the question as to when they became constitutive must still be settled. The proponents of a boundary line in the 17th or early 18th centuries have pointed to widespread evidence of the decline of rabbinic authority, the pursuit of secular education, and the disregard of traditional Jewish norms in Central Europe decades or more before the appearance of Moses Mendelssohn.<sup>12</sup> Their critics have held that such manifestations of dissolution, taken in historical context, really do not indicate a break at all. They are simply aberrant phenomena in a society which is still basically intact. Even where Jewish laws were violated, the violation was not yet justified by an appeal to values drawn from outside the Jewish community.<sup>13</sup> But in admitting a seedtime for Jewish modernity which precedes its initial boundary, the critics, in turn, are forced to assume the difficult task of determining at which point the heretofore exceptional or deviant instances become normative.

The issue is further complicated by the differentiation that must be made, even by non-Marxists, between the various classes within the Jewish communities. Jacob Toury, of Tel Aviv University, has argued that the integration of the Jews into German society proceeded much more rapidly among the wealthiest and the poorest classes of Jews, while the lower middle class remained impervious to outside influences for a relatively much longer period.<sup>14</sup> While, increasingly, during the 18th century, both economically successful Jewish merchants and destitute Jewish vagrants mingled freely with their gentile counterparts and

12. E.g., Azriel Shohet, *Im Hilufei Tekufot* (Jerusalem, 1960).

13. See Barukh Mevorah's review of Shohet's book in *Kiryat Sefer*, XXXVII (1961-62): 150-55.

14. "Neue hebräische Veröffentlichungen zur Geschichte der Juden im deutschen Lebenskreise," *Bulletin des Leo Baeck Instituts* IV (1961): 67-73.

adopted some of their values, the bulk of the German Jews still retained their traditional norms.

Even more significant than the qualification by social class is the one necessitated by geographical differentiation. During the 18th century, Eastern and Western (including Central) European Jewries came to differ enormously. Although the sociologist and historian, Jacob Katz, has attempted to argue the simultaneous emergence of modernity among Ashkenazic Jews through Hasidism in the East and through Haskalah in the West, he was forced to admit that Hasidism did no more than "distort" the framework of the traditional Jewish society while the Haskalah actually shattered it.<sup>15</sup> However much Hasidism challenged some of the norms of rabbinic Judaism, it surely did not create the characteristics of Jewish modernity. On the contrary, it soon became the most vociferous opponent of Jewish enlightenment.

If integration, on various levels, into non-Jewish society be taken as the basic criterion of the modern period, then the determination of a watershed for Eastern Europe in either the 17th or the 18th century is very hard to justify. A much better argument could be made for a turning point in the mid-19th century during the relatively liberal reign of Alexander II or even as late as the Bolshevik Revolution. As for the Jewish communities of the Orient and North Africa, with the exception of a small upper class, there seems to have been relatively little interruption of their mode of Jewish existence until they were exposed to their Ashkenazi brethren in the State of Israel. These Eastern communities have been the stepchildren of Jewish historiography, virtually ignored in textbooks and lecture courses until their aliyah in the 1950s. As their descendants now gradually make their way into Jewish scholarship, especially in Israel, they will doubtless try to diminish the weight given to European developments, just as Dubnow had sought to reduce the excessive emphasis which Graetz had given to the Jews of Germany, in favor of Poland and Russia. Periodizations of the modern age which are exclusively Europe-centered may become subject, therefore, to considerable challenge in the next generation.

With all of these difficulties, is there any value in setting a definite terminus for the beginning of modern Jewish history? I would argue that there is not, unless stimulating discussion with some new theory be itself a value. Any endeavor to mark a borderline which will be meaningful for all Jewries and embrace the origin or rise to normative status of all—or even most—of the characteristics of Jewish life as it presently exists seems to me bound to fail. Yet, one must begin somewhere in relating the Jewish history of most recent times. In practice it is, therefore, probably best to begin with the 17th century where, according to nearly all

15. *Tradition and Crisis* (New York, 1961), pp. 227, 245. See the criticism of Shmuel Ettinger on the original Hebrew edition in *Kiryat Sefer* XXXV (1959-60): 12-18.

views today, many of the elements that become constitutive of later Jewish life first made their appearance to any degree. But the conventionality of so doing must be fully realized. For, looking further backward, it is possible to attest certain apparently modern developments in some form even in earlier centuries, just as some scholars have tried to dismantle the Renaissance by carrying its various elements back to the Middle Ages.<sup>16</sup> Surely, the Golden Age of Jewish life in Islamic Spain and certain of the communities of 16th-century Italy possess significant characteristics of modernity when held up against 18th-century Poland. On the other hand, there remains a vast difference between the degree of modernity in evidence before the mid-18th century and that apparent thereafter. One can neither ignore the seeds of later development by suggesting a 17th-century "traditional society" little touched by change until a century later, nor, contrariwise, suggest that modernity has arrived along with its first harbingers.

What the Jewish historian can legitimately do—and must do—is to set the forces of continuity (which are never absent) against those of change and to analyze their relative progress and interaction. For most recent times, this means tracing a transformation of Jewish life that proceeded gradually, and sometimes fitfully, from West to East, from class to class, and in which various constituent elements—economic, social, and intellectual—underwent differing degrees of change. The scholar may find crucial points of development which he can legitimately regard as watersheds for a *particular* Jewry, but their limited importance must always be borne in mind. Rather than being concerned with the impossible task of determining the precise bounds of a single "modern period" for all Jewries, it would be best to focus on the process of *modernization*<sup>17</sup> in its various aspects, tracing it from one area of Jewish settlement to another and trying to determine its dynamics. (To what extent, for example, does it operate by diffusion and to what extent is it explainable by an internal dialectic within each Jewry?)

Finally, there remains the question of the differing perspective between Jewish historians in Israel and in the Diaspora. If the modern period, or the process of modernization, is defined in whole or in part by Jewish life led as a minority group participating in a non-Jewish society and subjected to the ambiguities and ambivalences of that situation, then the establishment of the State of Israel—as Dinur asserted—has put an end to such Jewish modernity, at least for the Jews in Israel. In fact, the entire Zionist movement can then be seen as essentially post-modern, a reaction spurred by anti-Semitism to the integration

16. Wallace K. Ferguson, *The Renaissance in Historical Thought* (Cambridge, Mass. 1948).

17. Cf., Richard Bendix, "Tradition and Modernity Reconsidered," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* IX (1967): 292–346.

avored by the *Haskalah*. But if Diaspora Jews are essentially living the heritage of the Jewish enlightenment while Israelis draw sustenance from the roots of Zionism, then we have the anomalous situation where Diaspora Jewry today lives in one period of Jewish history while Israeli Jewry lives in another. From the Israeli viewpoint, this suggestion that the Diaspora remains mired in an earlier period while Jewish history has marched on to its next stage is strangely reminiscent of Lessing's, Hegel's, and, later, Toynbee's viewpoint on the failure of the Jews to advance along with the history of the world. According to its Zionist variation, Diaspora Jews have stubbornly refused to make the called-for dialectical transition from *Haskalah* to Jewish nationalism.

For the future of Diaspora Jewish existence, such a conception must be as unacceptable on ideological grounds, as it is for historiography on account of its serious distortion of demographic realities. Yet there is no avoiding the obvious fact that many—though by no means all—of the commonly accepted characteristics of Jewish modernity do not apply to the State of Israel. Those which result from minority status are notably absent. Thus, there is a basic bifurcation that necessarily exists between that portion of the Jewish people which lives exposed to the complexly interacting forces of assimilation and anti-Semitism and the other portion which enjoys a high degree of political independence and the ability to shape education and culture. In order to employ a single concept of modernization which will embrace developments leading simultaneously toward today's Diaspora Jewry and toward Jewish existence in the State of Israel it is, therefore, necessary to include within it both the forces that have operated in the direction of integration into non-Jewish society and those equally modernizing influences—such as a modern separatist nationalism drawn largely from European models—that have driven in the direction of disengagement. Jewish nationalism must be seen not as post-modern, but as part of the modernization process itself.

A single concept is possible, moreover, because the division created by the opposing forces has not become complete. Although the integrative pattern still dominates Diaspora existence today, elements of Jewish national identity are noticeably present as well. By the same token, Israeli society is so influenced by the cultural and intellectual currents of the West that it hardly makes sense to declare that its center of gravity lies within a specifically Jewish sphere like that of pre-modern Jewish communities. If, therefore, modernization (which results in modernity) were conceived in terms of novel elements of both integrative and disjunctive character, it could meaningfully be used to characterize a basic process which has led to both of the forms of Jewish existence today: that of the Diaspora and that of the State. The conceptual unity of Jewish history would thus be preserved, even down to the present.

# *In Jerusalem: Reflections on Teaching the Holocaust*

IRVING HALPERIN

INSIDE THE HALL OF REMEMBRANCE, THE OHEL Yizkor, a middle-aged, soft-spoken, sad-eyed Israeli guide is speaking to an elderly American couple, whom he addresses as Mr. and Mrs. Murphy. The guide comments on the names of the twenty-one death camps, the memorial flame, the pit containing ashes of the unknown dead.

The faces of the couple are expressionless. They ask the guide two or three vague questions in dry, bony voices. Can they be making appropriate connections between where they are and what the guide is saying?

Just before the three turn to leave, the guide says quietly, "My father was in three of those camps."

Did he survive? I wonder.

The guide pauses, as though expecting the couple to ask him to elaborate. They do not.

"He died on the way to another one."

"Where is your father now?" the woman asks.

Hasn't she heard what the guide said?

"No, he died there."

"What pretty stones." She must be referring to the walls of basalt boundaries enclosing the hall.

Pretty! Those rocks of blood?

"They're from the Galilee," the guide says, looking away from her.

Then the three leave.

I did not have the impression then that the significance of the place had registered on this couple; it is as though they had not stood inside the Hall of Remembrance. Perhaps even now the occasion exists for them only in the realm of abstraction; the facts and figures on the Holocaust have not been bloodied. They will not remember.

In contrast, Father Cassini of Florence, one of the Righteous Gentiles. On this same morning, he is planting a sapling in the earth behind the Yad Vashem Museum. The priest is on one knee, carefully pressing and shaping earth around the fragile roots. Behind him, already inserted in the ground, is a small stone tablet bearing his name.

Rising, he clasps his hands behind his back. He seems to be looking at the distant Judean wilderness. Impossible to read the inward expression on his face. Perhaps he is reaching back to certain events that

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took place in the forties, in Florence. Later, while making a formal response to the honor being conferred on him, he would make light of his record in rescuing Jews. He refused to cast himself in the heroic mold. Irrepressibly cheerful, he laughed often and made his auditors laugh.

Some of those he had rescued—and it is said that he saved over a hundred Jews—are standing near him. They came to his church in Florence; he found hiding places for them. German intelligence learned of his activities and he was imprisoned; upon his release he continued to aid Jews.

During his visit to Israel he has been housed in the dwellings of some of those whose lives he saved. These hosts of Father Cassini are no longer “guests” in Europe, as they had been when, fleeing from murderers, they came to him for help.

He remembers.

I recall the students in my classes on the literature of the Holocaust at State; surely many of them will remember. Before enrolling in the course, they may have seen the film, “The Pawnbroker,” and read Anne Frank’s diary but hadn’t been interested to learn much more about the Holocaust. It is as though they had eschewed becoming informed lest they would have to share part of the responsibility for what happened. Or as though, by making certain inquiries and subsequently learning what had occurred during the Hitler years, they, themselves, would become morally stained. Resistant to recognizing that which might have stirred them much earlier, they had closed their eyes and kept them closed, as though to rationalize: we were neither the executioners nor the victims, so why should we be distressed now, a generation later? In short, they had not been ready to experience what Elie Wiesel has said is possible for those who were not “there”—“to step into the fiery gates.”

Why, then, did they enroll for the course? Their motivations were various, but, as far as I can ascertain, many intuitively felt that it was essential for them to be there. Here let me cite an excerpt from a statement by a thoughtful woman in response to my request that the students indicate what had prompted them to choose this elective course.

From an early age, I have loved the genius of German composers and admired their scientists. My interest in the war and Nazism really began with a book by Heinrich Böll, *Billiards at Half Past Nine*. This interest was strengthened during my first visit to Europe in the summer of 1969. The feelings I experienced in the house of Anne Frank began to crystallize. So when I saw this class listed in the schedule, I just felt that it was *necessary* for me to be here. What I hope to get out of the course is a clear, less theoretical view of what happened during the Hitler years.

Well, I can report, in all accuracy, that the reading material and discussions compelled such students to consider the Holocaust in a personal, “untheoretical” way.

How could they help but become emotionally involved when F. L. came to speak to us about her experiences as a young girl in Auschwitz? A woman of tremendous vitality, she made a powerful impression on the class. Before then, with but two exceptions, the students hadn't ever met a survivor.

I remember how she jolted us with her opening statement: "I don't want your pity. I just want you to understand." I can still hear her saying to us: "We arrived in Auschwitz and saw those emaciated, monstrously clothed people behind the barbed wire calling to us, 'Throw us your bread.' We thought there was something wrong, mentally deranged, with them. Sane people didn't look, act, that way. We couldn't have known then that soon we would become just like them. . . . We resisted the Nazis by living through an hour, a day, a week. We lived every day as though it was our last one. Just choosing to live *was* resistance."

Weeks after our meeting with F. L., the students spoke of the occasion with a sense of profound awe. As one young woman wrote in a journal:

At a couple of points during her talk she almost broke down, and I said to myself: "Don't you break down, because if you do I will, too." I just couldn't believe some of the things she told us. Like the story of the SS woman who ordered a prisoner, a former opera star, to sing arias, lieder and folksongs. The SS woman really seemed to enjoy the singing. But then, on the way back to her office, she coldly shot to death a young girl simply for eating rotten potato peelings that she had found in a garbage can. A woman yet! I honestly hadn't believed that women could do such things. It frightens me.

Surely such students will feel the obligation "to remember." And I would like to believe that if they were to visit the Hall of Remembrance, they would know where they were and what questions to ask.

Israeli school children in blue shirts and blouses pass before exhibit cases and blownup photographs in the Yad Vashem Museum. They look sorrowful. Probably none of them are over fifteen. They have grown up in a country which is no stranger to tragedy, the deaths of soldiers and civilians in war after war. Perhaps among these children are some whose fathers fell in battle. What goes on inside of them when they view the well-known photograph of the little boy with large, frightened eyes who is holding up his hands, apparently at the command of German soldiers visible in the background? Hands up!—as though he were a common criminal. Do these Israeli children identify with that boy? Can they imagine themselves holding up their hands before comparable oppressors?

And how do they react to the photograph of an elderly, devout-looking Jew whose beard is being snipped off by a much-amused, young German soldier? Are the children struck by how this old man, with an



expression of great dignity, almost hauteur, seems to be looking through and beyond his assailant? Or do they wonder whether this elderly Jew finally spat in his tormentor's face? Clearly, his character is suggested by his physical presence; he stands straight and tall before his tormentors. Despite the poverty and degradation that he must daily endure in a Nazi-made ghetto, despite the edicts and dangers of imminent expulsion to the "work settlements" in the East, he looks noble. A man with his largeness of spirit makes concrete our sense of loss over the destruction of European Jewry.

Compare these Israeli school children with the Jewish youngsters in the States to whom I often speak on the Holocaust. Mostly they are Sunday and Day School students, ranging in age from 12 to 18. Almost without exception, they live in comfortable homes and they have not been deprived of material blessings. They did not have to endure the austerity years in Israel nor were they called upon to dig anti-tank ditches in May of 1967. Those lads who are nearing their eighteenth birthday need not be concerned about serving in the army for three years. In short, they enjoy a privileged existence.

Then, breaking into their serendipitous lives on a series of successive Sunday mornings, I introduce them to the unsettling film, "Night and Fog," reproductions of the photographs in the Yad Vashem Museum, the recording of a Canadian radio production of Primo Levi's *If This Is a Man*. Nor do I spare them stories about brutality, suffering and mass deaths, despite the anxious concern of adults who caution: Don't shake up our children. Don't fill them with horror. Don't make the teaching of the Holocaust too emotional. Don't show "Night and Fog" to twelve-year old children. Some of them have fragile "defense mechanisms" and are liable to go to pieces. . . .

Well, I have heard these familiar "don'ts" before, but find them unconvincing. In an age of TV, film, and comic-book violence, young people are not without their defenses, and in being introduced to lectures and illustrated material on the Holocaust they do not readily fall apart. They honestly want those who speak on this subject to be level with them; they do not want to be spared because they are "only children;" something in them that is central to their birthright as Jews wants to understand.

One is impelled to say to these parents: to be a Jew means to run the risk of being upset periodically. We do not make catastrophes by our own choice. The world of European Jewry has almost disappeared. Unless *we* remember what it was, who will? The unpardonable sin for a Jew is to forget what his people have experienced and what he represents. Your children are the parents of tomorrow and it will be their obligation as Jews to tell the story of the Holocaust to their children.

But if they have been shielded from the disquieting facts, *what* is it that they will have to say to their descendants?

As I do not intend to spoon-feed them, my students learn of such brutes as Boger, the Auschwitz guard, whose great contribution to the history of civilization was the "Boger talking machine." I recapitulate the story of how he once came upon a small Jewish boy who was eating an apple and flung the child against a wall, killing him on the spot. Boger is reported to have said to one of his aids, "Wipe that off the wall and take it away." Then this dedicated servant of the Reich ate what remained of the apple and calmly went on to the next order of business. Years later, at the Frankfurt trial, defendant Boger would plead that he had been "just following orders."

How could a human being, made in God's image, murder a child for eating an apple? I ask the students. What should our response be to this hideous killer? Would primitive feelings of hate be appropriate?

Here, occasionally, some students take issue with my remarks. Although they agree that Boger was accountable for his actions, they declare that I ought not to suggest that hate for him can be justified (the notion of hating goes against the grain of their lifestyles); and they contend that one should try to "understand" Boger's psychological "problems." "You just don't hate him." Well, if finally we are unable to reconcile this difference of opinion, at least we are not wrapping our study of the Holocaust in the gauze of abstractions. And by confronting such questions, the students, in their own way, are attempting to "step back into the fiery gates."

In the course of our discussions, I ask the students a question which, in my experience, makes the most strenuous and worthwhile demands on them: "After the Holocaust, the loss of millions of Jews, why should one deliberately choose to remain a Jew?" My intent in posing this question is to point the students in the direction of Emil Fackenheim's view that, after Auschwitz, for Jews to "drop out" is to hand Hitler a "posthumous victory;" or stated positively, present-day commitment to Jewish survival and continuity is, in itself, a "monumental act of faith."

Ideally, I would want these youngsters to feel the same degree of passionate determination to remain Jews as the Russian Jewish youth do, those described by Wiesel in *The Jews of Silence*, who fervently, defiantly, danced the hora and sang Israeli songs before the Great Synagogue in Moscow on Simḥat Torah to let the city know that they were resolved to *remain* Jews.

A dark-haired and vivacious girl stood in the middle of a circle, leading a chorus of voices in a series of questions and answers.

"Who are we?"

"Jews!"

"What are we?"

"Jews!"

They laughed as they chanted their responses . . . The Kremlin was ten minutes away, and the echoes of the Jewish celebration reached to the tomb of Stalin.

Walking along a road bordered by lovely pine trees, I leave Yad Vashem and go directly to the Military Cemetery. From a certain perspective, it is not strange that these two sites, one in remembrance of the Holocaust victims and the other of Israel's war dead, are spatially contiguous, linking Auschwitz and Jerusalem. From Yad Vashem one climbs a flight of stairs and then presently comes to the Military Cemetery, a place of cedars, cypresses, firs, flowers, and all too many graves. Here the sky opens out, suddenly is immensely wide and still. In the far distance, upon the face of the vast, silent Judean wilderness nothing moves.

I walk among the dead.

Alas, I cannot decipher the Hebrew words on the gravestones. But it is not necessary to know the language to grasp the meaning of the numbers 17-19-20-21 on them. Or to understand the significance of the site for the 140 soldiers of the 402nd Transport Company, the Haganah and Palmah dead, those who fell in the Old City of Jerusalem during the 1948 and 1967 battles, those who died at Gush Ezion, Ammunition Hill . . .

So many graves.

Trees bend and sway in the wind, the air is still. Remote, almost spectral, are the shapes of distant houses to the south and north; paste-board silhouettes. The heavy silence of the houses and hills and sky, as though to suggest that whatever is, has always been, and always will be, "to end of days." A silence that seems to give the lie to the putative reality of consecutiveness, sequence, chronology—history itself. A silence that, like the millennial processes of sand and wind in gradually burying man's most formidable monuments, threatens to scale down the significance of this cemetery. So that perhaps the dead here will eventually recede into no more than just another chapter in the long and anguished history of Jewish tragedy.

At the top of the cemetery is the lot where Hannah Senesh is buried, along with six others of the Palestinian Jewish parachutists of World War II who had jumped into Balkan countries in an impossible effort to save entrapped Jews.

Seven graves: they form a circle and are enclosed by a ledge of rose-colored stones. Growing out of the cracks in the ground beside Hannah's tombstone are spikes of green plants. There are nine small stones on her grave. There is also a flowerpot. Perhaps her mother, who lives in Haifa, placed it there. She was only twenty-three at the time of her execution in 1944.

In her diary are two entries that especially move me:

April 1941: Sometimes I feel like one who has been sent . . . to perform a mission. What this mission is is not clear to me. I feel I have a duty toward others, as if I were obligated to them.

And two years later, shortly before her parachutist mission, she wrote:

I see everything that has happened to me so far as preparation and training for the mission ahead.  
I am fulfilling a mission . . .

The words "mission," "duty toward others," "obligated" are revealing; she had responded to the inner summons, "Whom shall I send?" by answering, "Here I am."

I am reflecting on her diary when some school children approach; later I learn that they are from Ramat Gan. With downturned faces they stand silently in a circle around the graves of the seven parachutists. One of their teachers begins speaking to them in Hebrew; he frequently utters the word Nazi. The youngsters seem to be staring beyond the graves at their feet. Perhaps they are remembering the recent war. Perhaps they are relating it to the time of the Nazis. . . .

Why speak of cool, unflappable Israelis? These students and their teachers are obviously pained; they must realize that many more Israelis will be sacrificed before peace finally comes. One sees in their faces the depth and intensity of their commitment to their country; they are determined that Israel will live; this is *their* mission, and, like Hannah Senesh, they feel responsible for carrying it through. But, in doing so, they are not likely to celebrate war or to become morally insensitive to the preciousness of human life. In contrast to many Germans of the Hitler years who boasted of being tigers on the battlefield and declaimed that it was sweet to die for the Fatherland, they would agree with an entry in Chaim Kaplan's *Scroll of Agony* diary: "I am the grandson of Isaiah the prophet, and I am at one with my ancestor in that bloodshed is abhorrent to me, in any form whatsoever. You may say that this is cowardice. I am not ashamed of that despicable quality."

Standing there, at the site of the seven, with its symbolic link to the Holocaust, they are, in my eyes, not merely a group of students from Ramat Gan but, also, the Survivors. I find them in many places of Holocaust literature, in the ghettos and death camps, in the bunkers and forests. The language and garb and national mannerisms of these survivors differ, but the resolve is the same: they are determined to live as Jews. To those who are bent on killing them, they say: "You want us to disappear from the face of the earth, but we will not disappear. The more you attempt to destroy us, the more we struggle to survive. We choose not only to survive but to survive humanely and with an unshakable faith in the value of life."

After Yad Vashem and the Military Cemetery, I feel the need to be

in a place of life and gaiety. So I go directly to the Biblical Zoo. In 1964 and 1965, during a sabbatical leave in Israel, my family and I frequently went there. On those occasions, numbers of Israeli children would be visiting the Zoo.

And here they are again! Children between the ages of eleven through thirteen up from Beersheba on a two-day *tiyul* of Jerusalem. For the moment, they have had their fill of touring and want a change of pace; happily, the Zoo is providing it.

The energy of these children! The lovely Israeli school children with warm, alive faces. The simplest occurrences excite them. I do not see a single bored countenance. A boy inadvertently drops a bag of apricot pits. Immediately, several children dive, like porpoises at a signal, reach to the ground, recover the scattered pits and hand them to their owner. All this is done amid shrieking and laughter.

From what sources does this marvelous energy flow? Perhaps it is because they are at home in Israel. Home is a profound existential sense which cannot be conveyed by the ordinary connotations of this word. At home in an entirely natural, unself-conscious way, as though they assume that the earth under them is their natural and permanent habitat, as though they are light years removed from that dark time when Jews were "in transit" aboard the S. S. Struma.

Now several children from this group take over something in the Zoo's playground that resembles a carousel. Shaped like a maypole, it is made to accommodate fifteen to twenty riders. Its platform is perhaps one foot off the ground. The children begin whirling around and chanting "*O Pah!*"—whatever that means.

Presently the moving platform begins swinging up and back, climbing dangerously higher with each swing. Three or four boys are the agents of this accelerated movement. One of the girls aboard the platform becomes frightened and cries out, "*Morah!*" A young woman appears and admonishes the overzealous ones; her warning is promptly heeded.

For a quarter of an hour I watch these high riders. No one seems restless, impatient to leave, to do the next thing. The "*O Pah!*" continues, then gives way to Israeli hiking songs. Everyone is singing. There are no troubled-looking children aboard that whirling platform. And, perhaps, the picture of these riders is a portent of their future as Israelis, for they are closely dependent upon one another for momentum and balance.

Watching the children whirl around, I feel that the instinct which impelled the remnant to come to Israel from the graveyard of Europe after the Holocaust was the healthy reflexive movement of a people away from death toward life. After the long night of destruction and suffering, they wanted to be—*hai v'kayam*. They must have sensed that in Israel

they would build and prepare the land for those who were yet to come. Yes, a prophetic journey, like the one made by Zivia Lubetkin when she and other Ghetto fighters were leaving Warsaw through the sewer canals. Exhausted, without food or water, groping hour by hour through the darkness, stench and filthy waters, she found the strength to go on by thinking of Israel.

My feet seemed to move automatically in this dark shaft, and the echoes of a remote dream returned: the dream which we had had of the distant land of Israel, of a life of labor and comradeship, of a life of dignity.

This remarkable woman reached the destination of this dream; today, the wife of Yitzhak Zuckerman, she is a member of *Loḥamei Hagetaot*.

Now I know that the children of Israel cannot "make up" for the Holocaust dead, and yet I cannot help feeling that there is a nexus between the children of the doomed Jewish communities during the Occupation and this Jerusalem scene. While at play in courtyards, empty lots, "illegal" schools, and in rooms with drawn blinds, the children of Europe must have hoped against hope that they would survive. And if many did not live to see the Liberation, who can say with absolute certainty that their spiritual presence does not live within these Israeli youngsters?

Watching them whirl around, I think: What a surpassing people of life! After the Holocaust, you still live and flower like the growth of trees following the ravaging destruction of a forest fire. So, too, the poet Yitzhak Katzenelson, having witnessed the struggles of the Jewish masses to survive, could write: "We will take with us into our graves the awareness that the Jewish people will endure eternally."

# *The Torah and Modern Man*

Review-Essay by ROBERT GORDIS

*The Torah—A Modern Commentary. I. Genesis.* Edited by GUNTHER W. PLAUT. Union of American Hebrew Congregations. New York, 1974. xxiv+585 pp.

THE PUBLICATION, UNDER REFORM AUSPICES, of *Genesis*, the first volume in a projected edition of the Five Books of the Torah with Commentary, is significant on several counts. It is undoubtedly the handsomest and most elaborate publication of the Torah ever issued under Jewish auspices or, for that matter, anywhere. This quarto is beautifully printed in large, clear type on adequately spaced pages.

The work opens with a statement by the editor, Gunther W. Plaut, entitled "Introducing Genesis." In it, he presents the theological approach which informs the work and discusses such themes as the Bible as literature, its relationship to science, especially evolution, the place of myth and legend, and the Higher Criticism of the Pentateuch—all in brief, non-technical form, comprehensible to the general reader. W. H. Hallo contributes an excellent article on "Genesis and Near Eastern Literature," illustrating the light that Semitic and Egyptian literature and language can shed upon our understanding of the Biblical text and its contents, and indicating both the values and the limitations of the comparative method.

The book of Genesis is divided into five parts, each preceded by an introduction that sets forth briefly its significance for the modern reader. Every chapter of the Hebrew text is accompanied by an English translation and a detailed commentary is printed below on each page. At the end of each chapter there are lengthier comments on important questions arising from the Biblical text. Then there is a section called "Gleanings," consisting of brief comments drawn from varied sources, such as Oriental literature, the Talmud and Midrash, Jewish and Christian medieval commentators, the Zohar and Hasidic interpretations, as well as thinkers, philosophers, scholars and writers of our own day.

Following the text, translation and commentary, the volume offers bibliographical notes and a list of commentators, both Christian and Jewish. The concluding section, entitled *Haftarot*, offers three selections for each *Sidrah*, the first being the traditional prophetic pericope, while the other two are drawn elsewhere from the Prophets and from the Hagiographa.

This book, intended for synagogue use, represents the first publication of the Torah with English commentary that is not Orthodox in



orientation. For many years, American synagogues have been wont to supply their worshippers with Bible texts containing a bare translation which is basically the antiquated King James Version, slightly modified for Jewish readers. In the more recent past, there have come into wide use two editions containing English commentaries. *The Pentateuch with Haftaret*, edited by Rabbi J. H. Hertz, is perhaps the better known. It offers a commentary and notes, explaining the text in the spirit of Orthodox apologetics and seeking to rebut all difficulties, philosophical, religious, ethical or textual, which the modern reader may encounter. The other is the *Soncino Humash*, which contains an English commentary by British scholars summarizing the interpretations of the classic Jewish commentators of the Middle Ages: Rashi, Ibn Ezra, Rashbam, Nahmanides, Kimhi, Sforno and others. It is, therefore, a highly useful compilation, but, by its very nature, it does not deal with many of the issues that confront people today. Even when a problem is recognized (and virtually every "modern" difficulty was noted by the Talmud, the Midrash or the medieval exegetes), the solution cannot satisfy the modern reader. For he desires to understand the Biblical text on its own terms, as it impinged upon the consciousness of its original hearers and readers, the Bible *wie es eigentlich gewesen*, "as it actually was."

This quest for the authentic and original meaning of the words by the Biblical lawgivers, historians, prophets, sages and poets obviously does not negate the intrinsic value of the mass of later interpretation, both haggadic and halakhic, legal, ethical and religious, engendered by the Bible through the centuries. The material, which is to be found in the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha, in the Qumran writings, in Philo and Josephus, in the Midrash and the Talmud, in the medieval philosophers, in the Hasidic teachers, and in modern theologians and philosophers, constitutes a cultural legacy of incomparable value. Its varied aspects are eminently worthy of being studied in their own right and for their own sake.

It has been argued in some quarters that Biblical scholars are engaged in discovering "what the Bible meant," and that what we need to know is "what the Bible means." The dichotomy is false; unless we know what the Bible meant, we cannot truly understand what it means, and our Biblical "interpretation" is an intellectual sham and a delusion. The authentic meaning of the Bible is the foundation of all that came thereafter.

The present work has succeeded admirably in presenting both *exegesis*, the interpretation of the original meaning of the text, and *eisegesis*, the reading into the text of later religious, ethical, legal and philosophic ideas. Most important of all, it keeps the distinction between the two clearly in view. Therein lies its major achievement. Through this book,

the meaning and the relevance of the Bible are made clear to modern Jews who are unable to adopt the fundamentalist position. Today it is this latter approach that is being ever more insistently presented as the only "authentic" interpretation of the Bible and Jewish tradition, to be swallowed whole or rejected *in toto*. No wonder so many elect the latter course.

This volume, as well as its as yet unpublished successors, marks a significant milestone in the development of Reform Judaism. For the first time, the Hebrew text is being made accessible for Reform worship. The work is also a major contribution to the task of self-definition in Reform Judaism, an achievement which can only redound to the benefit of Judaism as a whole. It offers a measure of the degree to which Reform has embarked on a "return to tradition," a trend which has been both applauded and deplored. While the Hebrew text has now been restored to a central position in the Temple service, it is noteworthy that the book opens from left to right, and not from right to left, as Hebrew is read.

More important, the editor seems to have adopted a theological position at the extreme left of the spectrum that is indistinguishable from Reconstructionism. In fact, the help and counsel of Mordecai M. Kaplan is acknowledged in the Preface. The Introduction, by Rabbi Plaut, begins with the statement, "This commentary proceeds from the assumption that Genesis, as well as the other four books which constitute the Torah, is a human book composed by men" (p. xv). Thus, in response to the question, "Does God have anything to do with the Torah?" the Introduction declares,

We believe that it is possible to say the Torah is ancient Israel's distinctive record of its search for God. It attempts to record the meeting of the human and the Divine at great moments of encounter. Therefore, the text is often touched by the ineffable presence. The Torah tradition testifies to men of extraordinary special sensitivity. God is not the author of the text, men are, but God's voice may be heard through theirs of you listen with an open mind (pp. xv-xvi).

It seems clear that this viewpoint dispenses entirely with the concept of revelation in any form. In regarding the Torah as completely the work of man, the commentary stands at the furthest possible remove from fundamentalist Orthodoxy, which, officially, at least, regards the Bible as the literal word of God. As for Conservatism, it has yet to articulate clearly its dominant attitude or attitudes here, as in other areas. This reviewer is not alone in feeling that a theistic faith cannot surrender the concept of Revelation. He conceives of Revelation as a process of communication, with both God and man being active partners in the process of "cosmic symbiosis." Hence, the Bible contains elements both Divine and human, being Divine in its source, human in its trans-

mission and human in its goal. In other words, the Torah is the word of God revealed to men through men, presenting the will of God reflected through the human personality of lawgivers, prophets and sages.

I have the impression that the position which Rabbi Plaut expresses proceeds further to "the left" than many Reform scholars, rabbis and laymen are prepared to go. But I may be mistaken, and he may be mirroring the current state of theological thinking in Reform Judaism. If so, contemporary Reform may be described as marked by a movement to "the right" with regard to ritual practices, accompanied by a movement to "the left" in theology. *Mutatis mutandis*, the history of "Liberal Judaism" in Germany in the decades before and between the two World Wars exhibited a similar duality, being marked by a return to Hebrew and increased rituals, on the one hand, and a strongly humanist emphasis in theology on the other.

There are several other indications that the move to the right in contemporary Reform is less than total. As has already been noted, while the Hebrew text occupies the place of honor on each page with the English translation below it, the book reads from left to right. The names of the weekly *Sidrot* are not indicated in the text of Genesis, though they do appear in the closing sections which present the *Haf-tarot*. The first two parts of Genesis are entitled "Prologue" and "Beginnings," and the last two "The Line of Isaac" and "The Line of Jacob." Incomprehensibly, the third section is called "The Line of Teraḥ." To the best of my knowledge, this is the first time that the old idolator has attained to such distinction! It should obviously have been called "The Line of Abraham."

The translation used is that of the *New Jewish Version* issued by the Jewish Publication Society; it thus reproduces all the strengths and weaknesses of that work. On the one hand, this version has fully utilized the available comparative material for the understanding of both the form and the content of the Biblical text. In its exegesis, it rests strongly on the classical Jewish commentators of the Middle Ages. It also has the important virtue of clarity and simplicity. On the other hand, the style is flat and uninspired, apparently upon the assumption that the Bible needs to be written in elementary, if not colloquial, English, in order to be accessible to the masses who, we are led to believe, are becoming increasingly illiterate. The *New Jewish Version* seems to ignore the fact that the Bible was written, not in the colloquial speech of ancient Israel, but, rather, with high literary art, exhibiting cadences and nuances of extraordinary beauty and power.

Thus, one of the trees in the Garden of Eden is called "the tree of knowledge of good and bad" (1:9). Joseph goes seeking his brothers and comes to Shekhem. The *NJV* translation reads, "The man asked

him, 'What are you looking for?' He answered, 'I am looking for my brothers. Could you tell me where they are pasturing?' " (37:15-16). One misses even an echo of the rhythm in the Hebrew of the question *mah tevakkesh* and of the answer *et ahai anokhi mevakkesh*.

One has only to compare the text of this translation with that of the recently issued (Protestant) *New English Bible* and the (Catholic) *New American Bible*, or the older *Revised Standard Version* to realize that much too high a price has been paid for "intelligibility." This is particularly unfortunate today, when the majority of American Jews are increasingly college trained and have been exposed to great literature!

A few comments on various passages may be added, for consideration in future revisions. The discussion of "The Tree of Knowledge" (pp. 34-36), concise and non-technical, is largely adequate, though some aspects of this fascinating subject are omitted which this reviewer would have wished included.

The commentary might have indicated more emphatically the central role which the Adam and Eve narrative occupies in classical Christian theology. Even more important, the work seems to pass over in silence the significance which the creation of Adam held in Judaism's concept of man and the content of ethics. It would have been well to include the text of the Mishnah *Sanhedrin*, chapter 4, and the supplementary paragraphs from the *Tosefta* in this connection.

On Genesis, chapter 18, which narrates God's appearance to Abraham and the visit by "the three men," the commentary recapitulates the difficulties that commentators have found in interpreting the section. The problems largely disappear when it is recognized that the appearance of the Lord to Abraham is distinct from the visit of the three men. Hence, Abraham's words in 18:3 are addressed to God, while verse 4 is addressed to the three visitors. There are important implications in this analysis for the Biblical concept of the role of God's angels or messengers and for the whole thrust and direction of Jewish theology.

The *Akedah*, "the binding of Isaac" (Genesis, chapter 22) is treated with the seriousness it deserves, in view of the important position that it occupies in Jewish thought. A brief passage from Kierkegaard is duly quoted. However, there is neither a presentation of his famous view of "the teleological suspension of the ethical," nor the significant discussion of this doctrine in contemporary Christian theology on the one hand and its alleged compatibility with Judaism on the other.

The additional notes on the *Akedah* mention the Midrashic tradition that Isaac was actually sacrificed and then miraculously restored to life. This tradition is the subject of Shalom Spiegel's superb study, *The Last Trial*, available in an excellent English version by Judah Goldin. The "sacrifice of Isaac" plays a central role in the Jewish lit-

urgy in invoking God's mercy and forgiveness, as in the High Holy Day service and in the traditional origin of the Shofar or ram's horn as derived from the substituted sacrifice on Mount Moriah. In this connection, there is great significance in the text of the ritual recited at a circumcision. The text declares that Isaac was sanctified in the womb, his circumcision serving "to deliver from destruction the dearly beloved of our flesh." Then the verse in Ezekiel 16:6 is cited, because of its repeated affirmation, "In thy blood, Thou shalt live." I believe, therefore, that the legend that Isaac actually died and was restored to life arose as a counter to Christianity and its claims that the sacrifice of Jesus brought absolution of sin to those who believed in him, while, accordingly, Judaism lacked this important instrument of salvation. The legend of Isaac's willing death at God's behest thus provided a Jewish equivalent to the Passion of the Christian savior.

The commentary on 25:25 suggests that the name "Esau" is "possibly related to the Arabic *'a'tha*, "thick head. I. Eitan pointed out that, in addition to the common root *'a sah*, "make, do," Biblical Hebrew possessed a homonym which is the cognate for the Arabic *ghashiya* and means "cover." Esau is, therefore, "the covered one." There now emerges a striking paronomasia on the name "Esau" in Obadiah's oracle against Edom. Verse 6 of his book is to be rendered "How has Esau (the covered one) been stripped naked? His secrets, laid bare!"<sup>1</sup>

Frequently, the "Gleanings" following each chapter reveal a singular aptness even when derived from remote sources. Thus, the incident of Rachel's stealing the *terafim*, the household gods of her father, Laban (31:19), is illumined by a parallel from the Latin poet, Virgil (p. 313). Incidentally, "To thee doth Troy commend her household gods. Now take them as companions of thy fate" (*Aeneid* II, line 293 f.), should be identified as a Roman (not a Greek) parallel. These observations, and others that might be added, simply indicate that no two editors would perform the task in precisely the same way.

This superb work demonstrates that one need not ignore or distort the original meaning of the text in order to find inspiration and insight in the variegated layers of interpretation which the Bible sustained in ancient, medieval and modern times. On the contrary, the quest for the original significance of the Biblical word serves to highlight both its own intrinsic greatness and the creativity which it stimulated during the two and a half millenia of its career as sacred Scripture.

1. A scribal metathesis has occurred in stich a: *nehpesu esau* = *nehsephu esau* See also, Jeremiah 49:10, which contains the identical play on words.

# *Judaism and Modern Philosophy*

Review-Essay by TRUDE WEISS-ROSMARIN

*Major Themes in Modern Philosophies of Judaism.* By ELIEZER BERKOVITS. KTAV Publishing House, New York. 1974. vii + 248 pp. \$12.50.

JUEDISCHE WISSENSCHAFT IS STILL, AS IT WAS intended to be by its Founding Fathers, descriptive, with a view to preserving the legacy. There is very little criticism. In fact, there is not even much of a critical stance vis-à-vis the texts which, because they are mostly sacred ones, were not, and still are not, subjected to objective, critical analysis. As for the Jewish ideas-and-ideals—and their expositions by medieval and modern scholars and thinkers—they, too, are “untouchable,” as it were. This attitude of reverence and uncritical acceptance also informs works on modern and contemporary Jewish thought, not excepting various “Holocaust theologies.” I was, therefore, delighted and elated by Berkovits’ statement, in the “Foreword” to his *Major Themes in Modern Philosophies of Judaism*, that his analysis is “critical.”

Berkovits fully lives up to his pledge. He is unsparingly critical and, because of this fervor, he concludes with the assertion that he has

given illustrative expression to the conviction that at this time we have neither a theology nor a philosophy that does justice to the essential nature of Jewish teaching about God, man and the universe as expressed in the classical sources of Judaism, nor one that can be maintained with contemporary philosophical validity (p. vii).

As Berkovits sees it, Hermann Cohen, Franz Rosenzweig, Martin Buber, Abraham Joshua Heschel, and Mordecai M. Kaplan, to whom he devotes the five principal chapters of his book (four are reprinted from various journals, including JUDAISM), do not make his grade. He faults them, and in no uncertain terms, on Jewish as well as on philosophical grounds. And he *judges* them—and without mercy. Thus, he demands that “even at this late hour he [Hermann Cohen] should be taken to task for his scholarly and philosophical inadequacies and inconsistencies” (p. 25). As for Rosenzweig, Berkovits insists that “with all due respect to the saintly genius of Franz Rosenzweig, . . . it is impossible to accept any of his categories as fitting either the essence of Judaism, the nature of the Jew, or the history of the Jewish people” (p. 47). About Buber, Berkovits asserts that he “confuses relatedness with relation. What he calls the I-Thou relation is in truth a situation of relatedness” (p. 133).

Since Berkovits is Orthodox, it is inevitable that his sharpest thrusts

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be aimed at Reconstructionism and Mordecai M. Kaplan. As he sees it, besides being un-Jewish and a-Jewish,

Reconstructionism . . . filled to the brim with the deadwood of outdated ideas, is not hollow enough to hold anything meaningful, its conception of the spiritual world is much too hollow to provide it (p. 191).

Even Heschel, whose Orthodoxy is not being impugned, does not make the grade with respect to the Jewishness of ideas. Berkovits finds them "alien and objectionable concepts" (p. 224), because "it is not easy to decide what is more objectionable, the 'theology of pathos' or 'the religion of sympathy'" (p. 206).

My principal discontent with Berkovits' method stems from his "critical analysis" which he bases on proof texts that are either not fully representative of the thinkers or are, unfortunately, marred by stereotype thinking. These flaws are especially pronounced in the treatment of Hermann Cohen, whom he portrays as a penitent who, "after a life of estrangement from Judaism . . . returned to the faith of his fathers, the faith of his youth" (p. 1). The notion that Cohen was alienated from Judaism during his Marburg years stems from the mistaken assumption that Cohen's "three representative volumes . . . *Juedische Schriften*," were written "during the years of Cohen's retirement from his chair in Marburg," that is, between 1912 and 1918. However, most of the essays were written in the decades when Cohen made Marburg the ranking philosophical capital of Germany. If Berkovits had examined the cumulative table of contents of *Juedische Schriften*, he would have seen that Cohen wrote *thirty-five* "Jewish essays" between 1867 and 1912, among them such seminal ones as "*Sabbath*," "*Naechestenliebe im Talmud*," "*Die Versoehnungsideoe*," "*Die Messiasideoe*," "*Der Stil der Propheten*," and "*Die Bedeutung des Judentums fuer den Religioesen Fortschritt der Menschheit*." Far from leading "a life of estrangement from Judaism," as Berkovits alleges, Cohen was profoundly and *passionately* involved with Jewish thought and scholarship throughout his life. And he took a proud, fighting stance vis-à-vis anti-Semitism, especially German anti-Semitism. Thus, in 1899, he published "*Unsere Ehrenpflicht gegen Dreyfus*" and, in 1902, he delineated how academic anti-Semites should be dealt with in "*Ueber die literarische Behandlung unserer Gegner*."

Indeed, Cohen referred to his "return" in 1880 (when he was 38 years old), the year he published his essay "*Ein Bekenntnis zur Judenfrage*." By "return" he meant the resumption of work in Jewish scholarship and philosophy which he had neglected during the years when he had prepared for a university career and established himself as *the* exponent of Neo-Kantianism. However, during his early Marburg years, Cohen usually spent the high holidays with his parents at Coswig, so



as to substitute for his father, who was Cantor and teacher of the community, as *hazzan* at Yom Kippur morning and afternoon services.

Rosenzweig, in his Introduction to Cohen's *Juedische Schriften*, sees proof of Cohen's Jewish alienation (*Entfremdung*) in his description of the Seder at his parents' house—emphasizing that what mattered to him was

the emotions of a dearly beloved son, close to the age of thirty, sitting with his aged parents at the brightly-lit table, holding his father's hand and gazing with trembling joy from father to mother and from mother to father

and being glad that his father quickly recited the first part of the Haggadah in about twenty minutes. Rosenzweig considered this proof of "*die ganze Ungeheuerlichkeit der Entfremdung*" of Cohen. Not so! Among Talmud scholars, like Cohen's father, the recitation of the Haggadah is not the type of *Erlebniss* and *Erschuetterung* that it was for Rosenzweig and that it usually is for "emotional Jews."<sup>1</sup>

Cohen "was in essence a tragic personality," as Berkovits puts it, but not for the reason he cites ("complete estrangement from the God of his people"). Cohen was *never* estranged from his people and their God. He was "a tragic personality" because philosophers who can not rest satisfied with confining themselves to academe—Cohen was very much *engagé* with the Jewish Community and with practical concerns of social justice—rarely find the response and acceptance that they crave. In this respect, the tragedy of the philosopher is not unlike that of the prophet. It is the tragedy of all those who want to transform society in their particular interpretation of the kingdom of God.

As a result of his notion that Cohen dwelt in a Jewish no-man's-land for some forty years, Berkovits wrongly concludes that "Cohen wrote in one format for the philosophically schooled gentile reader, and in another for the believing Jewish intellectuals," after his retirement from Marburg. He asserts that Cohen's *Der Begriff der Religion im System der Philosophie* is the version of *Die Religion der Vernunft* for the gentiles, whereas *Die Religion der Vernunft* is the Jewish version of *Der Begriff der Religion*. Berkovits is mistaken. Cohen had no philosophical double-standard. Reason was his ground and touch-stone—and reason is indivisible. *Religion der Vernunft* is not a Jewish version of *Der Begriff der Religion* but Cohen's confession of faith, hammered out over decades in the essays collected in *Juedische Schriften* and then refined and summed up in his magnum opus. It is a confession of faith in the same sense that Maimonides' *Guide* is a confession of faith: a delineation of Jewish *belief* without the admixtures of anthropomorphism which the demythologizing Rabbis of the Talmud as-

1. *Juedische Schriften*, Vol. I, pp xii f.

cribed to "the human language." The Torah, they said, uses it for the benefit of those whose understanding does not suffice to grasp what is not expressed anthropomorphologically.

Cohen, like Maimonides and the medieval Jewish rationalists, held that there was no contradiction between reason and revelation. To impute to him a double-standard, therefore, is mistaken. Leo Strauss succinctly noted that "Cohen had no doubt that in teaching the identity of Reason and Revelation he was in full agreement with 'all' or 'almost all' Jewish philosophers of the Middle Ages"<sup>2</sup> and, one should add, *mature* Jewish faith. Berkovits' attempt to prove that, in Cohen's interpretation, God's "existence practically conceals his Being" (p. 20), is due to an inadequate reading of Cohen's works, as attested by the assertion; "It is rather significant that Cohen never makes mention of the exodus" (p. 20). However, Cohen *does* refer to the Exodus in various contexts.<sup>3</sup> For example, he writes: "Hence, the entire Torah is a remembrance of the liberation from Egyptian slavery, which, as the cradle of the Jewish people, is not deplored, let alone condemned, but celebrated in gratitude."<sup>4</sup>

Berkovits' imperfect perusal of texts is painfully evident also in the reiteration of his thesis that Rosenzweig's concept of Jewish holiness is "lifelessness" (p. 61). Indeed, Rosenzweig conceived of Jewish peoplehood as a *religious* bond only, and not as peoplehood *cum* religion. Rosenzweig was not a Zionist, but his conviction that the Jews are "outside of history," i.e., that they have outgrown history, as it were, must not be interpreted to mean that the Jewish way of life and Jewish law were "lifelessly holy for Rosenzweig" (p. 67). True to the charge of *The Star of Redemption*—INTO LIFE—Rosenzweig, even in the years of his fatal and crippling illness, remained faithful to the two words that sum up *The Star*. Rosenzweig's adoption of Rosenstock-Huessy's "speech-thinking," as well as his passionate attacks on Hegel, after his espousal of religious existentialism, together with his avowal that God is "more" than truth (He is its source and ground), his emphasis on *Bewahrung*

2. Introductory Essay of *Religion of Reason*, (trans. Kaplan), p. xxvii. In my review of *Religion of Reason* (JUDAISM, Fall 1973), I pointed out that it is wrong to refer to *Die Religion der Vernunft* as Berkovits does. I wrote: *Religion of Reason* was published in 1919, under the title of *Die Religion der Vernunft*. The second, revised edition of 1928, has the title, *Religion der Vernunft*. The definite article was omitted in accordance with Cohen's instructions that had been overlooked in the preparation of the first edition. This seemingly minor matter is important. Cohen considered Judaism an exemplary manifestation of reason, but he was far from proclaiming it *The* "religion of reason." He regarded it as "*The* religion of Reason" in time but as "Religion of Reason" *sub specia aeternitatis*. Regrettably, Cohen's *magnum opus* is almost inevitably referred to, and quoted, with the definite article, according to the first edition.

3. Index to *Religion der Vernunft* (2nd ed. 1928), under the entry *Aegypten* (p. 545).

4. *Religion of Reason* (transl. Kaplan), p. 431.

—verification of belief in life, and his establishment of the *Juedisches Lehrhaus*—disprove Berkovits' portrayal of Rosenzweig and *The Star of Redemption*.

To do justice to Rosenzweig's philosophy of Judaism one must not confine oneself to his *Star*, with which the author no longer fully identified during his Frankfurt period, when he was closely associated with Nobel and Buber, in the *Lehrhaus*, and later with Buber in the translation of the Hebrew Bible. In Frankfurt, and especially in the years of his progressive paralysis, Rosenzweig transformed himself from a dilettante in *Juedische Wissenschaft* to a competent Jewish scholar and authentic Jewish thinker. To do justice to Rosenzweig's philosophy of Judaism calls for a much more extensive frame of reference than Berkovits'. It must include Rosenzweig's *Kleinere Schriften* as well as his *Briefe*, the indispensable source-and-commentary on how he came to be the Jew into which he made himself. Berkovits is right in tracing "The Christianizing of Judaism" in *The Star* (p. 60). But, in fairness to Rosenzweig, he should have taken cognizance of the fact that, as his Jewish knowledge and understanding grew, Rosenzweig progressively disassociated himself from *The Star*, although he never disavowed it. Berkovits' summary judgment of Rosenzweig is as flawed as is his summation of Cohen's Jewishness. He asserts that "intellectually he [Rosenzweig] was unable to liberate himself from the net of an arrogant civilization that claimed to be the world." Rosenzweig did liberate himself from Rosenstock-Huessy and in Frankfurt he advanced far beyond the "datedness" of *The Star*.

Buber's dialogical philosophy of the I-Thou relationship is, in fact, Hermann Cohen's "correlation" by a different name. However, while in Cohen's system "correlation" does not figure preeminently, Buber's thought is grounded, revolves about, and has its *raison d'être* in the dialogical meeting of "I and Thou." This is not the place for my own critical objections to Buber's dialogical existentialism. I agree with Berkovits that much of Buber's thought, especially his antinomianism which made him reject the very principle of halakhah, is un-Jewish. However, in Buber's case, he pronounces judgments on the basis of quotations torn from their context, while disregarding writings that do not fit his opinion that Buber's dialogue is "outside the historical authentic Jewish tradition" (p. 136). Berkovits is wrong when he says that

when Buber asserts that "the same Thou that goes from man to man also descends from the Divine to us and ascends from us to him," he is much closer to Christian teaching than to Judaism (p. 136).

The universal presence of the Divine (*ruah elohim*), to which Buber refers in *The Dialogical Principle*, is a Presence in which man may partake without abolishing the boundary between God and man by means of meditation, as Berkovits seems to assume.

Berkovits also errs in concluding that "there is no bridge from Buber's I-Thou to a We" (p. 104) and that it is not the people of Israel but only individuals of Israel who are in a dialogical relationship with God. This is not so. In many contexts and in many formulations Buber affirmed that "the whole of the history of the world, the hidden, real world, is a dialogue between God and his creature."<sup>5</sup> And this means Jewish history as well. The Jewish objection to Buber's dialogical principle is that he negates the possibility that traditional forms and institutions—laws and ceremonies—can serve as a medium for dialogue. It is not that Buber denies that Israel was "addressed" by God. In fact, he affirms it. Even more, he demands that the encounter at Sinai be actualized ever anew by every Jew in an individual manner and yet as a member of those who proclaim, "Hear, O Israel."<sup>6</sup>

Berkovits sums up his "Conclusion" of Martin Buber's religion of dialogue as follows:

The Jew turns to God addressing Him endearingly with the almost impudent *Gottenyu*. He does call Him with the word Thou. He knows that God is present, that He hears and answers. He prays to a living and personal God. But the distinction between creation and Creator, between creature and Creator is irremovable and insurmountable (p. 137).

Of course it is. But Berkovits' notion that Buber levelled this great divide is erroneous. In fact, Buber, in 1928, referred to the usage of *Gotenyu*, in the same way, as Berkovits did thirty-four years later, in 1962. Buber wrote:

The Eastern European Jewish beggar of today softly and unfalteringly whispers his *Gotenyu* in the trembling and dread of his harshest hour; the pet name is untranslatable, naive, but in its saying it becomes rich in meaning.<sup>7</sup>

I agree with Berkovits that "God is not man's eternal Thou; He is not always accessible" (p. 114). But, surely, this is not traditional Jewish belief, which is that God is always accessible, although—and this is important—His *accessibility* in no way implies that he *accedes* to the petitions which He is asked to grant.

I wonder what Berkovits means by asserting that "in the presence of God, there is no freedom. No one who stands in God's presence can deny him" (p. 116). Certainly, Israel did "deny" God and went after no-gods, because, as Buber correctly stated,

the word does not enforce its own hearing. Whoever does not respond to the Thou addressed to him can apparently go about his business unimpeded.<sup>8</sup>

5. *Israel and the World* (New York, 1948), p. 16.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 19.

7. *Ibid.*, p. 15.

8. *Ibid.*

Berkovits' statement that "during the act of revelation itself, He who speaks must be heard" is not substantiated by the Biblical text. "Revelation" is an ongoing process and that which is revealed is commandment, which one may either ignore or respond to by observance. Unless one accepts the Midrash which has it that, at the Revelation, God kept Israel captive with Mount Sinai inverted over them, Berkovits' assertion that "in the presence of God there is no freedom" is untenable. Man is free, must, in fact, be free, in the encounter with God. Otherwise, one could not be bound by the covenant. If it were theologically "respectable" that, as Berkovits puts it, "man's freedom is returned to him after the encounter," an *ethical* obligation to observe the Law could not be established.

In disputing the always-present accessibility of God, Berkovits comes dangerously close to the un-Jewishness of which he accuses Buber. He writes: "The confrontation is between man and the Word of God," meaning that "it is the once-revealed law of God that addresses man. . . . It is God's Word—without the actual experience of the Presence" (p. 116). This smacks distinctly of the Logos, and Christian mediation. The Jew always confronts and stands in the Presence of God, as *hundreds* of Biblical and Talmudic texts proclaim. To be sure, God may choose "to hide His face," i.e., not to respond to prayer. But His denial and refusal—His "hiding"—does not mean, as Jewish tradition sees it, that He is not present in the "confrontation." He *is* present but does not make His Presence manifest, *as man wants it to be manifest*.

Berkovits thinks that it is

perhaps the most bizarre aspect of Buber's work that although he has been teaching, preaching and interpreting Judaism through a long and rich life, the basic principles of his teaching render Judaism inexplicable (p. 104).

Not *inexplicable*, I would say, but inauthentic. Regardless of one's *personal* commitment or non-commitment to halakhah, the fact is that halakhah is "the way" of Jewishness. The acknowledgment of the paramount importance of halakhah does not necessitate literalistic belief in the Sinaitic revelation and/or the avowal of the immutability of the written and the oral law. It is Buber's antinomianism and his rejection of all Jewish rituals and observances that make him "inexplicable" as a Jew engaged in a life-long "I-Thou" relationship with Jewish tradition. It is not the theology of Buber's dialogical principle that is un-Jewish, as Berkovits argues, but Buber's Paulinian notion that the Law and laws cancel out the possibility of addressing and being addressed by the Eternal Thou.

Berkovits is an Orthodox rabbi, a member of the Rabbinical Council of America, and professor of Jewish Philosophy at the Hebrew Theological College. It is no surprise, therefore, that his critical

evaluation of Reconstructionism is negative. However, his rejection of the Reconstructionist negation of supernaturalism leads him to untenable conclusions concerning Mordecai M. Kaplan's God idea, such as that "Reconstructionist transnaturalism . . . is the most radical manifestation of anthropomorphism" (p. 185). Berkovits comes to this notion by a mistaken reading of Kaplan. He thinks the Reconstructionist position "is based on the naturalistic rejection of metaphysics" (p. 184), and disregards completely Kaplan's succinct definition of God as "the Power that makes for salvation" and as "the process" inherent in that Power. Neither formulation is alien or contradictory to Jewish traditional God concepts. When Kaplan proclaims "God as the Power that makes for salvation," he means that God guarantees and makes possible, as Berkovits almost approvingly quotes, "self-fulfilment along ethical lines and for the sake of the enhancement of human values and the quality of life." All the more peculiar, therefore, is Berkovits' statement about Kaplan that "in practicing transnaturalism, he is forever engaged in an intellectually incestuous mystical communion with his deified super-ego." His conclusion that "Christianity as well as Islam are by far closer to Judaism than Reconstructionist religion," is absurd.

It has been facetiously said that one cannot pray to a Process. But Kaplan's "God as Process" is validated by the Pentateuchal self-definition of God as *ehyeh asher ehyeh* (Exodus 3: 14). The new JPS translation of *The Torah* does not translate *ehyeh*, explaining in a footnote that the meaning of the Hebrew word is uncertain and is "variously translated: I am That I Am; I am Who I Am; I Will Be What I Will Be, etc."

I believe that the only translation which does justice to *ehyeh*, which is the future tense, first person singular of *hayoh*—to be, is "I shall be" and the repetition of *ehyeh* in *ehyeh asher ehyeh*, signifies ongoing being in the future. A semantic translation of *ehyeh asher ehyeh* would be "being in the process of future being," i.e., being-in-process. Need one add that the tetragrammaton, the third person singular of *hayoh*, confirms that the most authentic Jewish definition of God, implicit in the tetragrammaton, is very close to Kaplan's "process."

Kaplan's concept of God as "the Power that makes for salvation," has no other-worldly meaning, nor is it narrowly limited to "self-fulfillment," as Berkovits thinks. "Salvation," for Kaplan, means essentially *imitatio dei*, i.e., practicing the values (values figure preeminently in Kaplan's thought) for which God stands, as it were, and which are also the values that give meaning and fulfillment to life—the life of the individual and the collective life of the Jewish people and mankind. Essentially, Kaplan's "Power that makes for salvation" is a rephrasing of the imperative, "As He is holy, so you shall be holy."

It is true that Kaplan's "literalism" has led him to excise references to Jewish chosenness from Reconstructionist liturgy and to *attempt* (the attempt could not possibly succeed) to do likewise with anthropomorphisms and anthropopatheisms. One would want Reconstructionists to understand that their embarrassment vis-à-vis "supernaturalism" is deeply ingrained in the Jewish traditional interpretation of "supernatural" Biblical texts. However, these flaws of Reconstructionist theology are not "pan-anthropomorphism" and/or an extreme kind of pantheism, alien to Judaism, as Berkovits asserts.

Berkovits has a way of forcing "modern Jewish philosophies" into a Procrustean bed of his own construction. He invariably concentrates his "critical analysis" on *one* facet, ignoring the many others that go into the thought-systems which he analyzes. He does not note that the Zoharic triad of "The Holy One, blessed be He, the Torah and Israel" are also the three pillars on which Cohen's, Buber's, Rosenzweig's, Kaplan's and Heschel's thought-systems are constructed. Berkovits describes Heschel's thought as a theology of pathos because Heschel conceived of God as "affected by man." To prove his thesis, Berkovits cites, as he does throughout the book under review, selectively and tendentiously—in Heschel's case only from *The Prophets*. Berkovits avers that what he terms Heschel's "theology of pathos" and "religion of sympathy" are tainted with a Jewishly unsupportable anthropopatheism and so "it is not easy to decide what is more objectionable, the 'theology of pathos' or the 'religion of sympathy.'" (p. 206).

Heschel was a mystic. Still, when all of Berkovits' textual objections to "a theology of pathos" (p. 218) have been considered, there are scores of Biblical, Talmudic and Midrashic passages which have it, as does Heschel, that it is God, and not merely his Presence, i.e. the *Shekhinah*, who is "affected." Indeed, there is the Talmudic-rabbinic tendency to take the edge off of crudely anthropomorphic and anthropopathic passages "with the qualifying term *kiveyakhol*, 'as it were,'" (p. 218)—but, then, only a very literalistic reading of Heschel could lead one to assume, as Berkovits does, that Heschel did not delimit *his* reflections on God by means of *kiveyakhol*. Certainly Heschel was not a literalist. As a theologian, he was essentially a poet—and poetry is not subject to the accepted canons of precision in definition and terminology. Heschel *felt* theology and it was *feeling* that made him believe that God is *in search* of man.

Berkovits avers that Heschel's "theology of pathos" is essentially Christian, declaring that "Dr. Heschel, however, decided to take some anthropopathic expressions in the Bible literally," so that he "proceeds to offer us a God who is 'all-personal' and 'absolutely personal'" (p. 224). But, surely, *personal* did not mean for Heschel what Berkovits



assumes "personal" to mean in Heschel's thought, i.e., "absolutely personal" in human terms. As a rationalist, I have reservations about Heschel and, also, about Buber. However, the authentic Jewish texts are not monolithic, but reflect a wide spectrum of outlook on many basic issues.

In his brief chapter, "Faith and Law," Berkovits correctly points out that faith is not in conflict with law (or vice versa), as Paul never tired of proclaiming. However, he is unfair to Paul and Christianity when he asserts that Paul rejected "the deed" and that "the deed was degraded" (p. 139). The issue is not faith and law, but the distinctive character of Christian *grace* and *salvation*. Paul taught—and this is accepted Christian doctrine—that salvation is by faith and the gift of God freely granted. However, and this Berkovits and others as well ignore, salvation, which is by faith and grace, has the purpose of leading to good works, i.e., *deeds*, although not *mizvot*. The Letter to the Ephesians, put it thus:

For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing, it is the gift of God—not because of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them (2:8–10. Revised Standard Version).

In his "Foreword," Berkovits writes that in his

opinion, we have reached a stage that requires a great deal of rethinking of the nature of the Jewish position in the history of human thought and commitment in the light of contemporary philosophical problematics and existential experience. Judaism is awaiting a reformulation of its theology and philosophy (p. vii).

However, he does not say *why* this rapport with "contemporary philosophical validity" is required. Are "contemporary validity" and "contemporary philosophical problematics and existential experience" really the *sine qua non* lodestars of Jewish thought?

Whatever objections one may raise against the positions of Cohen, Rosenzweig, Buber, Kaplan and Heschel, they were not primarily concerned about "contemporary philosophical validity," although, of course, they were influenced by the thought-climate of their time. The relevance they sought was *Jewish* relevance, irrespective of "the light of contemporary philosophical problematics and existential experience." Cohen, for example, did not orient Judaism to Kant—but Kant to Judaism, even as in his pathetic attempts to demonstrate that *Deutschtum und Judentum* have so much in common that they are almost identical, it was *Judentum*, and not *Deutschtum*, which he established as his norm.

Berkovits is right when he states that the "intellectual strength" required for a contemporary Jewish philosophy must draw "its crea-

tive inspiration as well as its contents from the classical sources of Judaism—Bible, Talmud and Midrash.” In fact, Cohen, Rosenzweig, Buber, Heschel and Kaplan have been thus “inspired” and they have drawn amply on the classical sources of Judaism. It is to be regretted that Berkovits does not acknowledge the rootedness in classical Judaism (in the case of Rosenzweig it came *after* his *The Star of Redemption* period) of these five modern Jewish thinkers. This book would have gained in stature if the author had found at least some merit, something positive, in the five thinkers whom he considers. Possibly he intended it to be an unequivocal negation, so as to go on from there to the dialectical affirmation of doing justice, theologically and philosophically, to the classical Jewish teachings. Certainly Berkovits is well equipped to give us a work which, as he demands, interprets the Jewish legacy so that it “can be maintained with contemporary philosophical validity.”

## Halakhah For Its Own Sake

*Law and Theology in Judaism.* By DAVID NOVAK. New York. KTAV, 1974. 176 pp. \$10.00.

Reviewed by ELLIOT B. GERTEL

IT IS MOST heartening to see a volume that addresses itself to a theology of halakhah at a time when we have begun to realize that this is the *only* kind of theology that will bring coherence into modern Judaism. Of course, it is legitimate for Jewish philosophers and theologians to attempt to justify the role of law in religion, or even to defend particular laws and institutions. That has been the classical course of Jewish philosophy since Saadia Gaon. But it should not mean that halakhah cannot be allowed, as it were, to speak for itself, to employ its own idiom, to apply the inner dynamic of tradition despite those ideologies that would dismiss cumulative halakhah as malleable reference material.

Three things impress one immediately about Novak's book. First, the author insists that the modern rabbi, who has allowed himself to become a cross between a master of ceremonies and a jack of all trades, must regain "religious effectiveness" by attempting to understand the "essential relationship between law and theology in specific cases" (p. 2). One is impressed, secondly, by the author's reverence for teachers and interpreters of the Law. But most impressive of all is Novak's perception that the time is ripe for studying the unique relationship between law and theology, between halakhah and aggadah.

The author's particular approach is delineated in the first chapter, from which the book takes its

name, and in the last, "Belief in God." He defines philosophy as the "systematically intelligent inquiry into the essential structures of an object, those intelligible prerequisites which make the existence of the object possible" (p. 1). For Novak, the "essential structure" of the Jewish religion is the interrelationship of aggadah and halakhah. That relationship, however, is not "apodictical," for none of the Codes "deduce(s) specific laws from general theological principles." Rather,

Halakhah is the data, and . . . Aggadah is the model that widens the perspective found in the data . . . The intelligibility of this relationship lies in the relationship itself rather than in any one of its poles . . . The theological model will require modification in the light of the legal data, and the legal data, being viewed from the perspective of the model, will yield a meaning they alone could not possibly give (p. 4).

In this emphasis on the relationship, rather than the poles, of halakhah and aggadah, Novak employs the laws of marriage and divorce as illustration. His own ingenious suggestion is that since the Rabbis often infer the positive from the negative, and since matters of marriage are referred to in Rabbinic literature as "*gittin vikkiddushin*," literally, "divorce and marriage," we are to infer the theology of marriage from the theology of divorce. The dialectic between the theology and the law of divorce is the problem of Divine causality versus human freedom. The aggadah refers to "marriages foreordained in heaven" and describes how God's altar weeps every time there is divorce; the halakhah emphasizes personal freedom and, therefore,

spontaneous dissolution of marriage. The aggadah or theological model, which represents the "transcendent ground of commitment," attempts to temper such freedom so that the individual does not act erratically; the halakhah, however, which regulates the data of individual situations, guarantees the "immanent condition of the commandment" which is human freedom.

In the final chapter, Novak distinguishes among the three components of most commandments ("God who gives," "man who upholds," and "an object to be achieved"), and the components of the commandment to believe in God's existence: "man and God, because God is both the source and object of the commandment." Maimonides stressed that God could be known by ordinary experience and reflection; to Nahmanides, His Presence is known by the "public manifestations" (*nissim mefursamim*) of His miraculous intervention in history as recorded in Scripture. Novak's analysis of these views is, for many reasons, an important theological statement. First, while his suggestion of the "three components" of the commandments seems almost trite, it represents a bold affirmation of the traditional concept of *hiyyuv* ("obligation") to Divine commandments, which are "given" so that we may achieve a certain "object." Novak seems to equate that "object" with the *deed*, and not with the rationale. He seems to be declaring that the rationale is not as important as the obligation. Thus, he suggests a dialectic between freedom and obligation, or between rationalization and commitment. Unfortunately, the implications of such dialectic are not as explicitly discussed as in the first chapter.

The diversity of topics covered

in Novak's book renders it as interesting as any of the traditional collections of responsa (*she'elot ut'shuvot*). Especially interesting are his conclusions that women need *not* recite the benediction ". . . Who has not made me a woman," if it offends them; that considering the high divorce rate among young couples, a clause appended to the marriage contract would be in order so as to enable a Rabbinical Court to dissolve a marriage should the husband not cooperate. These are vital areas where halakhah can and should be sensitive to the needs of modern women. Also impressive is Novak's stand against hunting on the grounds that one violates halakhah by endangering himself and by inflicting wanton destruction on God's creatures, and his declaration that targets in the shooting range can stem the "excessive sexual drive" that leads one to hunt, if the individual does not have the ability or the inclination to curb his lusts through study of Torah.

Indeed, the concept of the sanctity of life appears to be an underlying concern throughout the essays, and a thread that ties many of them together. In his chapter on abortion, Novak takes a strict position, declaring that even the woman who desires one because of "mental anxiety," and who has traditionally been entitled to immediate abortion, might not truly know what she needs. Halakhically speaking, Novak derives this conclusion in a unique way. He presents the theology of the sanctity of life which emerges in the dialectic between the Noahide Laws (Gen. 9), which Jewish tradition has considered binding upon the righteous of all nations, and the halakhah. In order to trace this dialectic, Novak turns to Jewish history which is the "indispensable context of Jewish law . . . (that)

conditions its application" (p. 121). By studying Jewish history in the light of the Noahide precepts, Novak concludes that "the covenantal theologies of both Judaism and Christianity provide a . . . profound basis for the 'right to live' by emphasizing not only the immanent dignity of man, but even more, the transcendent sanctity of the human person. . . ." Novak adds, however, that Jewish history is not "the ground of Halakhah," that right being reserved solely for Revelation, "if Halakhah is to be morally obligatory" (p. 121).

The consistency of Novak's methodology in regard to the abortion issue with that offered in the first chapter is unmistakable. Yet this very method, although quite promising, does leave some questions unresolved. What does Novak mean by Revelation, and how is it independent of the historical process? What is the difference between history as "ground" and as "context" of Jewish Law? And, finally, if we are to posit a dialectic between Noahide and Jewish Law which emphasizes the sanctity of life, can we not find further dialectic within the concept of sanctity of life itself, between the sanctity of the individual life and the inviolability of the social order? Would this dialectic, according to the Rabbis, be carried on differently in halakhah and in the Noahide Laws? In other words, the "irreducible status of life," as Novak calls the idea that "life needs no justification" is not permitted by classical Jewish teaching to be apotheosized. The Bible and even the Rabbis theoretically legislate the possibility of capital punishment (although, to be sure, the practical execution of such laws was rare indeed). Capital punishment is an halakhic prescription that certainly reflects no *immanent* concern for the freedom of the criminal.

It is more aggadic in the sense that Novak uses the term; it represents the *transcendent* concern for the order of Jewish and general society, which, according to the Bible, is God's province. Perhaps there is a point in the Rabbinic dialectic at which the poles become reversed, when aggadah becomes halakhah and vice versa. This would make fascinating ground for further investigation of the interrelationship of law and theology in Judaism.

Novak approximates such issues in his essay on suicide, which is also deeply underscored by his concern for the sanctity of life. He employs the method of deriving the positive from the negative "by discovering what suicide is *not* . . . (in order to) discover what it *is*, and why it is consistent with our relationship with God" (p. 82). He offers a moving example of how the halakhah is always flexible when the sensibility of the innocent is at stake:

Only the suicide knows in his heart whether his act is a rejection of God's kingdom or not. Mercy demands of the rest of us that without an almost impossible criterion of evidence, we must assume that all private suicides are like King Saul, whom we are to eulogize and not condemn. In the last analysis, our practice of both justice and mercy is rooted in humility, the same humility that teaches us our lives belong to God. . . . In the end we sympathize with the suicide's ultimate plight. In the beginning we hope that all the Torah has taught us will teach, in the moment of existential decision, that even our agony does not place us at the center of the universe, and that our death as well as our birth is the gift of the Creator of all being. In the end as in the beginning the Creator and not the creature is the real I (pp. 92-3).

One wonders, however, whether it was theologically *necessary* for No-

vak to end such a fine thought with the assertion that "the Creator and not the creature is the real I." For, as Max Kadushin notes, Judaism teaches a "normal mysticism" where the I that God has given each of us is as "real" an I as God Himself.

Novak's essay on fine arts and Judaism is a most interesting treatment of the subject. He follows Heschel's assertion that the only symbol of God is man, and therefore concludes that "it is as futile to attempt to capture the true reality of man in sculpture as it is to capture the true reality of God in an idol" (p. 64). That Novak has opened up discussion on the implications of an halakhic theology of art is itself significant. A theology of aesthetics is hardly to be found in modern Judaism. What remains to be analyzed in the light of Jewish law and theology are standards of "artistic" and "decent" novels or motion pictures, which have heretofore been treated almost exclusively by Roman Catholic thinkers. The problem of censorship is also pertinent here.

Novak's chapter on riding on the Sabbath deserves particular note because of his insistence that those who, in their arguments for "progressive" halakhah, would weigh Mosaic Law against Talmudic Law, defeat their very purpose "by calling (on the one hand) for the development of Jewish law, and on the other hand by presenting a standard that would make the definition of work dependent on conditions in the time of Moses" (p. 26). Only when the more liberal halakhists emphasize a dialectic between Biblical and Rabbinic law, and work within its bounds, can they hope for fruitful tension between the two. This can be achieved only when there is some sense of their *continuity* and their *complementary* roles which is cul-

tivated by the awareness that the dialectic proceeds from the Bible to the Rabbis, and not in reverse fashion, and that all methodological logic must proceed in the same direction, even though it is possible for halakhic conclusions to reflect certain aspects of uniquely Biblical thought, especially in the theology of certain legal decisions. (The example given by Novak is the Biblical liberalism toward suicide, as represented by the paradigm of King Saul, as opposed to the Rabbinic strictness in bringing an attempted suicide to trial, a situation which still occurs in Israeli courtrooms.)

A few words about the general format of the book are in order. The continuity of ideas might have been better established despite the diversity of material, for the author's method is certainly embracing enough in principle. This method is well-stated in the first chapter, but does not sufficiently relate the model offered there to the treatment of such issues as women in prayer, mourning for a non-Jewish parent, delayed burial, and the placement of art, where the theological dialectic is all but eclipsed by the necessary concerns of *halakhah lema'aseh* (performance of the law). A more all-encompassing introduction, or, at least, a more explicit application of dialectical methodology within the chapters, might have been a more effective means of unifying the whole. Fortunately, the chapters stand alone. But in a novel and pioneering approach such as this one, the specifics of the interrelationship between aggadah and halakhah should have been repeatedly emphasized (and *exaggerated*, if necessary) in order to impress the method's possibilities firmly in our minds. The only major complaint about style is that there is evidence of the disparate



materials that comprise the volume. A better format would have been theological essays structured like the first chapter, as the question-and-answer pattern is not quite conducive to the task.

I have tried to indicate how I would like to see Novak clarify his approach because, whether or not one agrees with all of his conclusions, I believe that his methodology can, and will, enable us to recognize that halakhah possesses not only a place in theology, but is *the* place where theology must be grounded. We look forward to future series of essays with a treatment of new issues as well as of related problems, some of which have been posed here. Novak's approach certainly goes a long way toward taking the stone which has often been shunted aside and transforming it into the corner stone of theology. The last sentence in the book does so succinctly: "Philosophical theology is not just an optional gift dependent on our own particular, subjective mood, it is a halakhic requirement."

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### A Special Kind of Jewish Art

*La Haggada Enluminée. Etude iconographique et stylistique des manuscrits enluminés et décorés de la Haggada du XIIIe au XVIe siècle.* By MENDEL METZGER. Preface by René Crozet. E. J. Brill. Leiden, 1973 (actually 1974). Vol. I, 518 pp. + xxxii, 481 figs. 290 Gld.

Reviewed by RACHEL WISCHNITZER

AS I was leafing through this absorbing book, a scene from my childhood flashed into my mind.

We used to spend the Passover holiday at the home of my maternal grandparents in Bialystok. Strangely enough, it was the word "oficina" that emerged first in my memory as I recalled this episode. The oficina, an outbuilding facing the courtyard, was the place where my grandfather took me to burn some bread crumbs, the ancient and symbolic way of marking the difference between the everyday and the Passover week when only unleavened bread is eaten. The little house was usually rented out, but it was unoccupied at that time. It occurred to me now, as I read, that there had been a problem there in Bialystok. Why was it necessary to "clean" that house where hardly any bread crumbs could be found?

There is ample literature on Jewish rites and customs. Dr. Metzger chose for closer exploration those associated with the observances of Passover as they are portrayed in Haggadah manuscripts of the 13th-16th centuries. He has arranged his illustrations from illuminated Haggadahs in topical groups. Thus, the baking of matzot is illustrated with eleven miniatures, the search for, and the burning of, the leaven is shown in nine pictures, and so forth. All in all, thirty-one aspects of the Passover story are thus covered in 481 scenes. The description and interpretation is fascinating reading. The remaining text—200 pages out of the 500—is given over to listings under various classifications. The reader must first turn to the chronological table (p. 385) to get some orientation for finding his way in the maze of material. The dates tell a shocking story. While all of the Sefardic Haggadahs are of the 14th century, the Ashkenazic ones, including those of Italian provenance, belong, with two exceptions, to the 15th and 16th centuries. This disproportion of the surviving illuminated Hag-



gadachs may be attributed to various causes. The 14th century German Haggadahs may well have perished in the Middle Ages; as for the Sefardic ones, they may not have been produced after the massacres of 1391. However, during the 14th century the Jewish communities in Spain did form a cohesive group, aware of their historical identity.

Students of the Sefardic Haggadahs have noted that a considerable number of the illustrations are devoted to Biblical scenes. The usual explanation has been the availability of Christian-illustrated Bibles which provided incentive and models. Metzger rejects this thesis, pointing to the paintings of the 3rd century Dura Synagogue as evidence of the Jewish innate urge for artistic expression. The Sefardic sense of historic identity does account for the imagery of their Haggadahs, in which the Seder and its preparations are integrated in the course of the historical events. Individual episodes of the Passover service receive much less attention. Thus, the youngest child who asks the four questions does not appear in the Sefardic Haggadah, whereas he is a popular figure in the Ashkenazic ones.

A most baffling illustration of the passage about the four questions is found in the 15th century Haggadah of the John Rylands Library in Manchester (cod. hebr. 7). It depicts a curtain that is drawn across a room. Suspended on a rod, it is held up in two places by a man from behind, so that the curtain hangs in three festoons. Metzger ingeniously interprets the curtain as a "mystery." For the child who asks about the meaning of the Passover meal, the food and the ceremonies that accompany the eating are supposed to appear as a mystery. The way in which the curtain is draped, raised a little at

some points, means that there are openings to facilitate the solving of that mystery.

Most amusing are the scenes showing the house-cleaning process and the removal of the leaven with candle and feather duster. In the so-called Nuremberg II Haggadah I found an answer to my childhood query. In the interior elevation of a two-story house, a man with a feather and a bowl dusts the wine barrel in the cellar. Obviously, the uninhabited cellar must be cleaned of bread crumbs just as must any other place, including the "oficina" at my grandparents' home.

The scene of the rabbis of Bene Berak, as represented in both the Sefardic and the Ashkenazic Haggadahs, is examined in detail. The verse of Ps. 79:6: "Pour out thy wrath upon the heathen that have not known thee," is illustrated in Sefardic Haggadahs with an apocalyptically overturned cup. In the Ashkenazic Haggadahs, however, the Messiah appears, sometimes preceded by the prophet Elijah. Riding in on his donkey, he takes with him men, women and children, some of whom are carried along on its tail. Metzger's interpretation of the scene as piously illustrating the *délivrance messianique* seems to me to miss the point. Then, too, the observation that the verse from Psalms does not imply vengeance is hardly called for. The 15th century was a period of growing northern realism, of secularization, of dissidence. The Ashkenazic Jew did not believe in sudden Messianic deliverance and the messianic picture makes fun of the idea. In the same spirit of irony, the expression of hope, "Next year in Jerusalem," is accompanied, in a 15th century Ashkenazic Haggadah, by the remark, "or in Bruenn."

Three Haggadahs, among them the Darmstadt I manuscript, famil-

iar from the beautiful facsimile edition by Bruno Italiener, are singled out by Metzger as showing a departure from traditional imagery. He is well aware of the impact of Flemish art and its derivatives in Germany and elsewhere in the formation of the illustrations of these manuscripts. Whether by oversight or other reasons, the Seder picture of the Darmstadt I Haggadah is omitted and not even referred to. Interpreted by August L. Mayer in Italiener's publication, it shows a remarkable fusion of two motifs, the rabbis of Bene Berak and the Four Questioners. On the other hand, we are indebted to Metzger for the discovery of the former C. W. Dyson Perrins Haggadah, now at the Bodmer Foundation in Coligny-Geneva. In it we find depicted the laver with two spouts, suspended on a chain, and with the long towel, which Metzger traces to Flemish art. (New Yorkers can see that type of laver in the Mérode Altarpiece of the Masters of Flémalle at the Cloisters.) However, the late Guido Schoenberger has shown (*Historia Judaica*, April, 1947) that the double-spout laver was much in use in Germany. He reproduces a 14th century bronze laver from the synagogue at Wetzlar, another one from the synagogue at Bornhofen near Bonn, as well as a German engraving of c. 1467. The laver with the towel appears already in the 14th century Ashkenazic Bird's Head Haggadah.

Owing to financial difficulties, this first volume came out after considerable delay, and the catalogue of the Haggadahs will be in the second volume. But without it the use of the book requires constant turning of the pages, from the illustrations, to the Concordance with the text, and from there to the actual passages in the text where the picture is cited, which means again turning the folio-size

pages. It would have been wiser to have put the bibliography in the second volume and the catalogue in the first. In that bibliography, incidentally, Bezalel Narkiss' *Hebrew Illustrated Manuscripts* (1969) is not listed, and Philip Goodman's *Passover Anthology* (1961) should have been also listed under *Texts*. It was good to see that the Yale Haggadah, recently discovered by Walter Cahn, is included. One further criticism: the captions of the pictures offer no information beyond the number. They should have contained the call marks of the manuscripts to facilitate identification.

The title of the book, *The Illuminated Haggadah*, though commendable for brevity, needs qualification. There is an ambiguity in the way some writers refer to Haggadahs with black and white illustrations—woodcuts and engravings—as being illuminated. Illumination—from *lumen* (light)—is a technique of painting that is different from mural, panel, or canvas painting. Used primarily for the embellishment of script executed on parchment, illumination consists of decoration as well as illustration. Illuminated pictures in a book are called miniatures, that word being derived from *minium* (cinnabar) which produces a vermilion pigment, though a miniature might be of any color, even a *grisaille* (painting in neutral gray).

My critical remarks should not detract from the great value of this ambitious undertaking. It was an enormous task to extract the illustrations from books and articles—original photos and films were often not obtainable—and arrange them in iconographic sets. The study has a preface by the late René Crozet, who, as a director of the Centre d'Etudes Supérieures de Civilisation Médiévale de Poitiers, supported many Jewish scientific

ventures. The author lives in Strasbourg, and the book is dedicated to the memory of his brother, parents and grandparents who perished in the Holocaust.

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### The Resistance of Russian Jews

*The Jewish Bund in Russia From Its Origin to 1905.* By HENRY J. TOBIAS. Stanford, California. Stanford University Press, 1972. 499 pp. + xvii.

*Trotsky and the Jews.* By JOSEPH NEDAVA. Philadelphia. The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1972. 299 pp.

*Reviewed by* MORRIS SLAVIN

MY MOTHER once casually remarked that she had smuggled arms for Jewish defense groups during the Revolution of 1905. How Jews of the Russian Empire had reached such a state of defiance is chronicled dramatically by the author of *The Jewish Bund in Russia*. Tobias has dug into the sources to produce a fine narrative and, at the same time, to analyze ideas in conflict—Marxian socialism, Jewish nationalism, the structure and nature of a revolutionary party, and the relationship of the principles of self-defense and terrorism to the concept of human dignity. This is done with understanding and objectivity not only for the Bund, but for Lenin's *Iskra* group, for Martov and the Mensheviks, and, equally, for the Polish Socialist Party. In summarizing the achievements of the "General Jewish Workers' Union in Lithuania, Poland, and Russia," Tobias has revealed how successful the Bund was in rousing a spirit of resistance to Tsarist anti-

Semitism among the Jewish workers and intellectuals. This is reason enough why the book will not appear in Brezhnev's Russia, but it would be a pity if it remained unknown in the Western World as well.

Tobias makes clear that, from its very beginning, the Bund suffered from an unavoidable ideological dichotomy. On the one hand, it was linked, with other Social Democratic groups and parties of the Russian Empire, to an international outlook. On the other hand, the Bund emphasized the cultural separateness and uniqueness of the Jewish masses and the need, therefore, of a special appeal to them as both workers and Jews. When it entered the Russian Social Democratic Workers' Party as an autonomous section, it was granted the right to decide its own position on the Jewish question. Most socialists understood that Jewish workers suffered doubly—as workers and as Jews. Thus, to resolve this disadvantage, the Bund began to fight as a Jewish section within the larger Social Democratic movement of Russia. "National is not *nationalist*," its spokesmen asserted. In addition to economic, political, and civil freedoms, each nationality had a right to purely "*national aspirations*," they argued. This freedom could best be achieved, however, by establishing a federation of all of the nationalities of the Empire, a position that Lenin was to champion shortly before his death when he disavowed the centralizing scheme of Stalin in the question of Georgia.

In the light of events in Russia since 1917, the position of Lenin on Jewish nationalism proved shortsighted and historically false. Fundamentally, it stemmed from an incomprehension of what constituted a nationality, and was influenced by the anti-Semitic views of Karl

Marx. The latter argued that only by assimilation could the Jew be saved from his own nature which was rooted in money and usury. By abolishing both of these evils, the Jew, as such, would cease to exist. The position of Otto Bauer and Karl Kautsky, leaders of Austrian and German Social Democracies respectively, was essentially the same, if not quite as crude as the "self-hatred" of Marx's views. All these internationalists wanted the Jew to disappear into the wider mass of humanity—so long as it was a Russian or German version of humanity. It was against this assimilationist pressure from both Russian and Polish socialists that the Bund upheld its banner.

Although a strong defense can be made of the Bund's position on Jewish nationalism, its view of the Party structure is a different matter. If one begins with the premise that the overthrow of Tsarism was the primary objective of all socialists (or non-Russian nationalists, for that matter), then the forging of an effective instrument for its destruction was absolutely essential. Whatever differences existed in Russian Social Democracy on the national question had to be left for the future to resolve. The immediate task was to overthrow the government of the Tsar. To apply, therefore, the principle of federation and autonomy to the structure of a political party was to weaken its organization and effectiveness. The Bund demanded not only autonomy on the Jewish question within the Russian Social Democracy, but the exclusive right to speak for, and to represent, the Jewish proletariat as a national party within the larger Social Democratic movement. This was to misunderstand the nature of a revolutionary party which required unity and discipline. A federation of autonomous parties could never have

been an effective weapon against Tsarism whatever successes a local group might have had to its credit. Moreover, how could the Bund pose as a champion of the principle of internationalism while maintaining an exclusive organization and demanding to act as sole representative of the workers of one nationality? Trotsky put the question sharply:

The Bund was either "the only representative of the interests of the Jewish proletariat in and before the Party" or "a special organization of the Party for agitation and propaganda among the Jewish proletariat (pp. 211-212).

In addition to the national question and the nature of a revolutionary party, no issue was more sensitive than that of police violence. If instilling a sense of dignity and of human worth in the Jewish worker was a prime reason for the Bund's existence, then how ought socialists to answer the beatings and humiliations of the police? Some advocated retaliation; others endorsed the use of violence as a matter of principle to uphold outraged human dignity. After wrestling with the dilemma, the Fourth Congress of the Bund (held in 1901), resolved to continue pursuing legal means of redress and seeking to arouse public opinion. Yet, in rejecting political terror, it defended the right of self-defense, including that of an individual's outraged honor. When officials began to whip prisoners for participating in May Day demonstrations, the Bund practically accepted popular violence and vengeance against those responsible. From this position it was but a step to organize the defense of street demonstrations and to make military preparations against *pogromchiks*. After the horrors of Kishinev the Bund placed itself on a war footing. It was dra-

matically successful in a number of towns, routing would-be pogrom makers or halting them in their tracks.

The high point of Bund activity was reached in the Revolution of 1905, during which it marched together with Russian Social Democracy. The massive strikes led by the Bund in Lodz outnumbered those of St. Petersburg, and in Warsaw it succeeded in imposing a levy on Jewish tax payers in behalf of the strikers. These strikes were converted into political demonstrations as the movement reached its peak on May 1. Furthermore, the Bund encouraged its partisans to acquire arms and to learn their use, considering seriously the possibility of an armed insurrection against the regime. Revolvers were smuggled into the Pale, bombs were manufactured, and special defense groups were drilled in preparation for squaring accounts with Tsarism. Bloody clashes with armed troops even succeeded in winning over individual soldiers against their officers. Throughout the year almost the entire Jewish population was militarized. In terms of practical political activity the Bund was closer to the Bolsheviks than to their rivals, the Mensheviks, and carried out many joint actions with them. These dramatic events are sympathetically and graphically described by the author, whose second volume, now in preparation, should be equally rewarding for the reader.

Nedava's book is an interesting mish-mash of warm appreciation for Trotsky's lifelong struggle against anti-Semitism and an exaggerated critique of his alleged efforts to deny his ancestry. The author is careful, for the most part, to present a balanced account of Trotsky's early support of assimilation for the Jews of Russia, in line

with the primitive conceptions of Karl Kautsky and Otto Bauer. Unfortunately, at times, Nedava reads more into a confession, statement, or incident than follows from the facts. A ready example that fairly leaps at the reader is the following:

(Trotsky) considered himself in no way different from all other Russian Marxist revolutionaries, but Lenin seems to have thought differently: "He [Trotsky] isn't one of us. With us, but not of us," he once expressed himself (p. 6)

says the author. Yet, anyone familiar with the long, and, at times, acerbic controversy between Lenin and Trotsky on organizational questions, knows that the former was referring precisely to these differences. They had nothing to do with those "differences" of national or cultural origin between the two future leaders of the Revolution, as implied by the author.

Nor is Nedava's choice of words in analyzing the complex problems of nationalism, nationality, internationalism, or assimilationism always felicitous. He writes that Trotsky's hatred of Nazism was doubly strong "because of his racial origin; he clearly foresaw the imminent genocide of his coreligionists." The use of the word "racial" is inexact, while the word "coreligionist" would be ludicrous, had it been used in a different context. Again: Trotsky's acceptance of Marxism was a "disguise," according to the author, for the "revolt against the squalor and wretchedness under which Russian Jews lived in the ghetto." How does he know this? The answer, of course, is that he does not and cannot know it. Men rebel for a variety of reasons—from national oppression to personal ambition. Not the least of these is a passion for social justice.

Nedava is aware, naturally, why



oppressed nationalities in the Russian Empire joined revolutionary parties. He cites the eloquent figures compiled by the police on the numbers arrested and deported after the failure of the 1905 revolution. Although Jews formed but 4% of the population, they contributed 37% of Siberian exiles. Their ratio of participation in revolutionary movements was six times that of other nationalities. The reason, as the author makes clear, is that so many of them were members of the middle class with a good education and a strong sense of grievance. Lenin praised the "particularly high percentage" of leaders and of internationalists contributed by the Jews of the Empire. To imagine that the Trotskys, the Martovs, or the Axelrods accepted Marxism as merely a psychological cover for their condition as Jews is to reduce their struggle to a par with the future Polish socialists who were far more Polish nationalists than socialists. The Jewish Bolsheviks and Mensheviks were, above all, internationalists.

One of the problems that tends to confuse the issue is that traditional Marxists, Jewish and non-Jewish alike, refused to see that one could be a staunch internationalist without necessarily sacrificing the desire to defend a specific, national culture—its language, literature, theater, and sense of history. The narrow definition of nationality given to it by Kautsky and Bauer, and accepted by Lenin and Trotsky, that it must have a territorial base, excluded the Jews immediately. (Even on this term it could be argued that there was a Jewish nationality in the Pale.) Since Marxists were convinced that religion was a passing stage in humanity's advance to greater consciousness, the non-religious Jew

was difficult to define or accept. The best solution to the problem, therefore, was for him to disappear, i.e., to assimilate. As to why a Pole or a Ukrainian was destined to remain while the Jew was to disappear, they answered that, in addition to other characteristics, Poles and Ukrainians had their own territory. The fact that Jews had existed for two thousand years without a territory of their own made no impression on them. Nedava accepts their basic premise, therefore, that an internationalist could not be committed to the preservation of his own Jewish past.

Added to this belief is the author's confusion of just what the relationships is between internationalism and the right of self-determination. He writes: "One would have thought that socialism, claiming universal application, would not entertain any notion of self-determination of people" (pp. 84-85). The answer is just the opposite. It is precisely because the concept of socialism is based on the reality of the international division of labor, of the world market, and of the ideal of class solidarity that its proponents defend national prerogatives as being inalienable rights for all men. The question must, therefore, be put to the author: When Trotsky repudiated his early principle of assimilationism—after his own experience with Stalinist anti-Semitism and after the rise of Hitler—when he began to speak of "the Jewish nation" and even to endorse the possibility of a territorial solution, did he, thereby, turn his back on internationalism? It would be absurd even to entertain such a question. Trotsky remained an internationalist to the end but recognized, as Nedava makes clear, that Jews needed a refuge at once and could not wait for a socialist world to rescue them.

The author characterizes Trotsky's concern with pogroms as an "obsession." Is this an accurate description? An obsession, we are told by psychologists, is the domination of one's thinking or feeling by a persistent idea, image, or desire to the exclusion of everything else. It would be preposterous to argue that this, indeed, describes Trotsky's consistent denunciation of the Black Hundreds and their handiwork. Like many other revolutionaries (not all), Trotsky fought that most barbaric manifestation of Tsarist society vigorously and with great effect. Of course, his writings and speeches are full of references to this "total degradation of humanity" (p. 66). But to hold, as the author does, that "this haunting dread never left him" (p. 49), is to reduce Trotsky's revolutionary activity to a parochialism that was totally foreign to him. This is why Nedava is convinced that Trotsky's reaction to pogroms was not that of a "universalist" but that of a Jew. He concludes, therefore, that, as a result of the Beilis case, and had it not been for the interruption of World War I, Trotsky might have "moved further in the direction of moderatism rather than toward international menshevism" (p. 83). He might have, indeed, if the reaction to pogroms had been an "obsession." If, on the other hand, it was the "normal" response of a revolutionary internationalist to struggle against this Tsarist bestiality and to defend the most wretched and oppressed of his subjects, there is no need to look for a specific reaction. Trotsky could, indeed, have reacted, not only as a socialist but as a Jew, as the author emphasizes, but to call this reaction an "obsession" is to ignore the larger commitments of Trotsky's life and thought.

Nedava makes too much, also, of Trotsky's rejection of Lenin's offer to take over the Commissariat of Home Affairs, i.e., that he take charge of the internal police to combat counter-revolution. He is convinced that Trotsky's refusal was based purely upon his consideration that the post was inappropriate, as it would expose his fellow-Jews to even harsher attacks by the anti-Semites. This argument is given justification by citing the Talmud that "The children of Israel are responsible to each other." In reality, there is no need to go beyond the social reality of revolutionary Russia. Trotsky felt rightly, it seems to me, that his installation in such a post would give a needless weapon to the anti-Semitic Whites. Moreover, it is doubtful if his temperament was suitable to be a policeman, even a revolutionary one. As it turned out, his creation of the Red Army saved the Russian Revolution, as the author readily admits, writing: "Judging from the records of eyewitnesses and authentic documents, the October Revolution could not have survived but for Trotsky" (p. 159).

How did the Jewish community look upon Trotsky's role in the revolution? Many, naturally, were proud of him and of other Jewish Bolsheviks, especially as *pogromchiks* pushed more and more Jews toward the support of their enemies. The natural desire for vengeance was undoubtedly a factor. On the other hand, the author believes that this prominence of Trotsky's increased anti-Semitism, especially in the Ukraine. Zionists tended to hold Jewish Bolsheviks responsible for this. The historian, Simon Dubnow, reported that the Smolny Institute was secretly being referred to as *Centerzhid*, (like center), and that anti-Semitism



was bound to grow because of the prominence of the "Trotskyes and Uritskyes." The chief rabbi of Moscow, Maze, is cited as saying: "The Trotskyes make the revolution, and the Bronsteins pay the bills" (p. 167). It is unfortunate that Nedava does not probe sufficiently whether this prominence really contributed to anti-Semitism as he thinks. Is it not more likely that civil war and general misery would have encouraged the White Armies to utilize the traditional hatred of Jews, regardless of whether a Trotsky were at the head of the Red Army? He cites Petlura as revealing that pogroms were utilized as a policy to raise the morale of counter-revolutionary forces. Moreover, this speculation is beside the point. Jewish youth reacted like all other men—they joined, en masse, to defend their homes and to avenge themselves on their enemies. Forceful leaders were bound to arise among them.

The rise of Hitler, the Moscow trials with their anti-Semitic overtones, the "bureaucratic farce" of Biro-Bidjan, and the desperate efforts of Jews to find asylum in Palestine—all helped change Trotsky's earlier concepts. By 1937 he began to realize that "the Jewish nation will maintain itself for an entire epoch to come" (p. 204). Although the author is convinced that Trotsky "would have subscribed to the Zionist solution" because he had accepted the concept of "territorialism," there is no evidence that Trotsky ever dropped his characterization of Palestine as being "a tragic mirage." He foresaw the physical destruction of European Jewry by a "Kleinbürger run amok" and continued to call for the mobilization of workers and of Jews in an open struggle against fascist gangs. This would not have

precluded his defense of Jewish efforts to save themselves by going to Palestine if they could. But he warned, in 1938: "between the Warta [an affluent of the Oder River] and the Volga there live seven million Jews—in the coming war they will be annihilated first" (p. 224). (Underscored in the original.) Hitlerism had, indeed, changed his views on the Jewish question, as he frankly admitted. It would have been both criminal and absurd to have retained the traditional Marxist idea that the Jewish question would be resolved by a policy of assimilationism. The world of the late 1930s was radically different from that of the early 1900s when Trotsky was a youth. This change in concept as to the character of the Jewish nationality, needless to say, made him no whit less an internationalist. Among the nationalities of the world that had a right to exist as such, the Jews were included. In all other respects, Trotsky remained consistent as the internationalist that he had always been.

Despite the differences with Nedava that I noted in these pages, I feel that he has made an important contribution to an understanding of the personality and role of a historic figure. Not only is Trotsky's relationship to the Jews an interesting and revealing side of his life, but a number of prophetic judgments made by him on the condition of man in general, and of the Jew in particular, are disclosed for the first time to the English reader. This is justification enough for the book.

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**Eastern European Jewry Revisited: The Novel As Social Commentary**

*The Agunah.* By CHAIM GRADE. Translated from the Yiddish, with introduction, by CURT LEVIANT. Bobbs-Merrill Co. Indianapolis, Indiana, 1974. 265 pp. \$6.95.

*Reviewed by* LESTER A. SEGAL

FOR THOSE whose impressions of Eastern European Jewry have been garnered from such deeply moving essays as *The Earth is The Lord's*, written by the late Abraham Joshua Heschel in the aftermath of the Holocaust, Chaim Grade's fiction may come as a surprise, more likely as a shock. The serene beauty of spirituality which pervades that society, as Heschel saw it, contrasts sharply with the seething volcano-like moral, social, and religious tensions whose eruption form Grade's equally moving depiction of Jewish Vilna—the "Jerusalem of Lithuania." Clearly, Heschel, the moralist-mystic, the scion of great Hasidic masters, and Grade, the secularist, Yiddish novelist, born and bred in pre-war Vilna, are far apart in their perception of that Jewry in which both have their cultural and spiritual roots. To say of Grade that he is a "secularist" is correct but not entirely adequate, for he brings to the novelist's craft an intimate familiarity with the learning and piety of the Eastern European yeshivah, the Talmudical academy which fructified the Jewish intellect and nurtured the spirit. Whether Grade is a Talmudist is quite irrelevant; what matters is that his fiction, including his recently translated *The Agunah*, and, especially, his monumental *Tzemach Atlas*, is permeated—saturated, I should say—with the intellectual and moral presuppositions of Talmudism and the yeshivah, and the social milieu

which it helped to fashion but with which it was, at times, in bitter conflict.

In his characterization of the spiritual dimension of Eastern European Jewry, however, Grade leaves behind the overly ethereal and romanticized version which one encounters in even so critical and satirical a literary master as Mendele Mokher Sefarim, the nineteenth-century novelist. In the typical Eastern European Jewish community, according to Mendele—and Heschel concurs—the study of Torah had been in progress since time immemorial, virtually all of the townfolk were scholars, and the synagogue or house of study was overflowing with people of varied social background, all preoccupied with sacred studies. Either Vilna, which admittedly was not just another township, does not fit the mould of the typical community, or the typical, at least as Mendele portrays it, no longer exists, and perhaps it never has.

Grade does not restrict his incisive portrayal of Jewish society to its mere spiritual substance. As he leads us through the streets and alleyways, the courtyards, the marketplaces—and the synagogues and houses of study, too—of inter-war Vilna, we soon discover that the artisans and other simple folk do not, as Mendele would have it, simply gather around at dusk to listen to morally edifying discourses based on Torah literature. While even by the 20's and the 30's of the present century there surely were still many minds brimful of Torah learning, there were many more (even much earlier in the century) whose emotional and intellectual loyalties no longer lay with the tradition, and for whom pressing social and economic issues seemed to force ideological solutions far beyond those provided by that tradition. Grade simply con-

firms—albeit in fictional format—the significant impact of secularization on Jewish society. If the two central rabbinical figures in *The Agunah*, Reb Levi Horowitz, and his bitter opponent, Reb David Zelter, agree on nothing else, they both give expression to this reality: “Nowadays,” exclaims Reb Levi, “no one stands in awe of God, so would anyone stand in awe of a rabbi?” (p. 25). “Once upon a time,” Reb David seems to hear the Torah scroll in the ark lament, “the Zaretche shul used to be crowded with Torah scholars... Woe unto men for their contempt of the Torah! Woe unto such a generation. The study room is desolate and the bookcase in the little library is covered with cobwebs” (p. 39). Reb David himself must contend with his twelve year old first-born son who does not want to study Torah. The lament is, in fact, not a new one. It was already being sounded with the disintegration of the traditional Jewish life style in the 80’s and 90’s of the previous century, and it reaches its most poignant expression in the verse of the leading national poet of the period, Chaim Nachman Bialik: “Walls of the study houses, walls of the sanctuary... Why are ye silent and despairing? Do ye dream of days of yore, Or do ye mourn for those that leave ye evermore?” New aspirations and ideals have borne his co-religionists away, “they have all flown and I am but alone.”

In Grade’s novel the leading rabbis, such as Reb Levi, are even loathe to speak out too vigorously against certain infractions of the Torah because, given the diminution of their authority and moral suasion, they foresee even greater sacrilege resulting from public debate—“for then the mob will truly see that disobeying the rabbis is permitted” (p. 104). The propo-

nents of religious orthodoxy see this as a self-defeating process for, “If the great Torah scholars are no generals, the plain Jews are no soldiers. Vilna is becoming a city of heathens” (p. 104). An elderly Sabbath observer, who drags his ailing feet from store to store each Friday afternoon to exhort Jewish proprietors to close before sundown, retorts, “God forbid, Vilna is still the Jerusalem of Lithuania.” But he, too, seems to be whistling in the dark, for he feels that he cannot justify his exhortations if the leadership does not speak and act forthrightly.

Vilna, then, as it emerges in the pages of Grade’s stirring novel of a world gone by, pulsates with passions and petty rivalries, social antagonisms, the greed and envy of lesser self-serving religious functionaries, violent confrontations between rich householders and poor workers, the conflict of religious orthodoxy and secular Jewish ideologies, and not least with human tragedy, above all the tragedy of the *agunah*, the grass widow, Merl. Her husband had presumably been killed some fifteen years earlier in World War I, but, since there are no witnesses to attest to this fact, she cannot remarry. To do so is to commit adultery. Merl, the *agunah*, a pretty, high-spirited, and independent seamstress with a capacity for intense love, who, like so many of her young fellow-workers, had actively participated in the anti-Czarist movement, is no longer rooted in the faith of her forefathers and does not feel compelled, as a matter of religious principle, to seek the rabbinic dispensation which may enable her to remarry, a dispensation extremely difficult to come by. Yet her misfortune is further compounded by the ironic circumstance that she agrees to a marriage with a rather pious, pathetic middle-

aged widower whom she must support, for whom she has little affection or respect, and who is incapable of providing fulfillment of either body or soul. Truly a *mésalliance*, but one made possible through yet another irony, the granting of the necessary rabbinic permission by Reb David, whose compassion and obstinacy lead him to defy his Vilna colleagues, notably Reb Levi. The grant of permission is, for Merl, however, quite dispensable, and it is only her inept and luckless husband who has insisted upon it. Why, then, does she lend herself to it, or to this ill-suited match at all?

It is, in effect, the insistence of Reb David that leads her to take a step which is fraught with calamity for both of them. Reb David is subjected to rabbinical censure, to the deprivation of his livelihood, to the condemnation and suspicion of his shrewish wife, while the tragedy-ridden life of Merl ends in the extreme tragedy, death by her own hand. Grade creates a relationship between the rabbi and the *agunah* which transcends that between the woman and her new husband who becomes an almost incidental participant as the fast-moving events unfold and reach their climax. For the ill-fated Merl and the proud Reb David seem to be peculiarly drawn to one another precisely because both are the victims of personal circumstance as well as of society's conventions and expectations, and because both are proud, determined and unsubmitting. As we follow Grade's deft development of the relationship, it is clear that erotic elements are present in this mutual, though unspoken, admiration, elements which, while they remain quite neutral, are, however, the only ones throughout the entire novel which evoke meaningful sentiments of love between man and woman.

One may say that the very essence of this novel is tragedy, though not that of the *agunah* alone. There is the tragedy of Reb Levi, whose wife and only daughter are both mentally deranged and whose extreme religiosity are, apparently, in large measure, to blame. Here, Grade provides a brief but penetrating psychological analysis in which the elderly rabbi forces himself to consider the likelihood that his extremes grow out of personal moral dilemmas. Reb David's situation is not much better. His life is beset by a sickly and not overly sympathetic wife, a dying infant, the lack of acceptance by his peers, defamation by those to whose hypocrisy he is a threat ("some shoemaker's son," one of them calls him), and his own displeasure with himself "for having become a rabbi instead of an artisan like his father" (p. 40). Tragic, too, is the confrontation of the older, distinguished, rabbinic authority with his younger, gifted, and dedicated colleague, both of whom claim to be acting for the greater glory of God and the Torah, and Grade never clearly suggests that one is right and the other wrong. The confrontation is especially tragic because, while Reb David is driven by compassion to be more lenient in his interpretation of the Law, he is yet not wholly free of that obstinacy which abounds in Reb Levi, and, by the same token, there are moments when compassion wells up in the latter, too, but he cannot permit himself to depart from the Law as it stands. And as the passions of the populace are whipped up by the self-serving mongers of rumor and deceit, who seek to exploit the dispute for their personal advancement and gain, the authority of the Torah and the majesty of the Lithuanian citadel in which it had been housed for countless generations is further

eroded. While autobiographical elements, as such, do not appear in *The Agunah*, one cannot help but sense that, even for Grade, the "secularist" who no longer defines his Jewish being with reference to the mandates of religion, this erosion can be only a momentous tragedy. For Grade, whose identification with Vilna of yesteryear is a continuing and total one, there can be only one other and far more ultimate tragedy, the triumph of the sword against the spirit—to paraphrase a rabbinic dictum—in a world gone mad, and the annihilation of all of the Vilnas of Eastern Europe.

The translator of this novel, Curt Leviant, has once again put the reader in his debt by making still another Yiddish classic available in impeccable English literary format. Grade's Yiddish, heavily endowed with the language of the Talmudists and the technical phraseology of their learned discourses, is not easily rendered into English. But, since the translator has done his task so well, it is to be hoped that the raconteur of Vilna will gain the attention that he deserves from the English reading public.

LESTER A. SEGAL is associate professor of history at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst.

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TO THE EDITOR OF JUDAISM:

Robert G. Weisbord's article on "Black Hebrew Israelites" (Winter 1975) is a compound of omissions, surmises and prejudicial statements about Black Jews in the United States and in Israel.

To begin with, if Black Hebrew sects were "clearly part of the black urban landscape" in the United States, why is there so little information about them? . . . Little has been written because there is little to write about. Except for a few, who might have undergone conversion as part of a slave household or because of genuine conviction, until recent years they formed no discrete Jewish associations and did not participate in or relate themselves to any authentic Jewish life. Some so-called "minyanim" have been formed amongst Blacks. Some even wore a Mogen David around their necks or adorned themselves with other Jewish symbols. Some groups incorporated Jewish practices in their religious rites. But such groups could no more be considered in the legitimate Jewish orbit than Seventh Day Adventists, who have parallel Jewish rituals. Few Black Hebrew sects as a body have converted to Judaism, and when that has occurred, it was only in the last few years. Most became "Jews" by self-definition and self-declaration. Their "rabbis" were not officially ordained . . . Only through conversion could one become a Jewish mother and thus bear a Jewish child. This halakhic entry was rarely utilized by Black Americans. So to write of 40,000 or even 25,000 Black Jews in America is demographically absurd. . . .

I am not opposed to Black Americans becoming Jews. . . . I helped obtain sanction and support, a decade ago, for *Hatzaad Harishon*, a Black Jewish organization. Black Jews were aided in finding jobs, housing, relief and Jewish affiliations. Black Jewish children were placed in YM-YWHAs, Jewish camps and Jewish Day schools.

But this organization finally foundered, when its own Black Jewish membership could not resolve the internal problem of "Who was a Jew," as they finally had to define it by exclusive classic Jewish standards.

As to Israel, the Chicago Blacks had no possible claim on that country under the Law of Return. Whoever badly advised Israel that it would be good public relations for Jews abroad and in Israel to admit them at the frontier where they showed up en masse, did both Israel and world-wide Jewry a brutal disservice. If they had come as students, as temporary workers, as tourists, they would have, and should have, been made welcome. But the *huzpedik* assertion that only they were the true historical Jews and that the white Jews were usurpers of the land, should have been answered with immediate deportation.

Weisbord's unabashed partiality for these misguided Black Americans unhappily gives support to some Israeli government officials and some citizens at large, who have used their unfortunate presence as an argument to deny the legitimate Black Jews of Ethiopia open admission to Israel. The Falashas have suffered as long as Jewish history for their religious faith and are still being limited in their prayerful wish to live in, work for, and even die for their ancient Homeland. Only in recent months have the official doors been left slightly ajar so that a few have entered. This has resulted from pressure by interested Jewish groups and the uncertain revolution and civil war going on in Ethiopia.

World-wide Rabbinical and other Jewish communal organizations should press for a full-scale aliyah to Israel of the 20,000 remaining Ethiopian Jews, before they shrink to nothingness through conversion to Christianity or death by poverty, disease and world Jewish neglect.

*Pelham, N.Y.*

GRAENUM BERGER



PROF. WEISBORD *replies*:

Mr. Berger rejects my assertion (which he fails to quote in its entirety) that Hebrew sects were "clearly part of the black urban landscape in New York, Philadelphia, Chicago, Washington, D.C. and elsewhere by the time of World War I." He then proceeds to say that his research on Jewish slaveholders and Jewish abolitionists has yielded no information about Black Hebrew sects. No wonder. Blacks identifying themselves as Hebrew Israelites or Jews did not organize themselves until the last years of the nineteenth century and the first decade of this century. Even then, as I stated in my article, their religion was an amalgam of Judaism and Christianity.

Mr. Berger is also bothered by my assertion that the number of Black "Jews" in America (I used quotation marks in the article as well) is closer to 40,000 than the millions claimed by the Black Hebrew Israelite leaders in Dimona. In making my statement I was certainly not using a halakhic standard. I was merely estimating the number of Black Americans who *identify themselves* as Black Hebrews, Hebrew Israelites or Jews. . . .

Mr. Berger accuses me of "unabashed partiality for these Black Americans." Briefly stated, my view is that the Black Hebrew Israelites themselves were to blame for their difficulties in Israel. By declaring themselves the rightful owners of the land, by calling most Israelis usurpers, by some of their criminal actions, they virtually invited the hostility of the government and the Israeli populace. To repeat the point I made in concluding my article, they are "black nationalist religious zealots who have been victimized by their own zealotry."

Mr. Berger's own zeal to save the Falashas (a praiseworthy enterprise) has obviously led him to misconstrue my sentiments.

Kingston, R.I.

ROBERT G. WEISBORD

TO THE EDITOR OF JUDAISM:

Having found much of value in Gilbert Kollin's article, "The Advisability of seeking Converts" (Winter, 1975) I would like to offer a suggestion as well as an objection to one of his points.

By way of suggestion, it should be noted that for the vast majority of non-Jews, conversion to Judaism has never appeared as a viable option. One of the major reasons is that many of them believe that Judaism is either unwilling or unable to accept converts. Thus, a first step would be to dispel this misconception.

Although I agree with much of the article, I must take issue with the assertion that ". . . we should simultaneously strive for the universal re-institution of the traditional conversion format while at the same time broadening the motivational options deemed acceptable." This statement seems to be refuted by the paragraph which precedes it which includes the realization, "Orthodox conversion is suited to bringing people into an Orthodox community. But the modern Jewish community is no longer universally observant or even religious." The obvious conclusion would be that as Jews must come to recognize a variety of motivations for conversion as acceptable, so must we come to recognize a variety of conversion procedures as legitimate. . . .

Just as religious conversions today, be they Orthodox or liberal, include an ethnic element, so an essentially ethnic conversion service will include religious dimensions. However, in light of the current variety of Jewish affirmations, lifestyles, and experiences of the present-day Jewish community, it seems both unreasonable and unreal to insist that the rite of conversion must be uniform in practice for everyone.

HENRY BAMBERGER

Poughkeepsie, N.Y.



RABBI KOLLIN *replies*:

Rabbi Bamberger's argument, namely that the format of conversion should match its content, is well taken, but it is precisely at this point that I disagree. I believe it was Jakob Petuchowski who, in analyzing the contents of public rituals, took care to separate liturgy from prayer. The current return to traditional rituals in the Reform movement re-enforces this premise. Reform Jews . . . are simply recognizing that certain formats *per se* have an effective and unifying character.

One of the strengths of Judaism has been the ability of ritual to carry diverse and simultaneous messages at the same time. In this manner a variety of ideological trends could be housed within the same social framework. The various attempts to insist

upon absolute congruity between ideology and format have all resulted in dead-end spin-offs.

It is precisely because the conversion format is essentially of a civil-legal character that it can accommodate the ethnic convert. Moreover, the only chance we have of re-creating a universally acceptable conversion process lies within the realm of procedures. . . . The existing tri-furcated system does not tend toward a solution. I cannot see Reform and Conservative rabbis granting the Orthodox a monopoly on conversions. To my view, only the area of unitary format offers the possibility of creating a conversion process which is . . . equally acceptable to the major religious groupings in the world Jewish community.

New York, N.Y.

GILBERT KOLLIN

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